



NORTHWEST TERRITORIES
**LEGISLATIVE
ASSEMBLY**

1st Session

Day 31

20th Assembly

HANSARD

Tuesday, October 22, 2024

Pages 1189 - 1244

The Honourable Shane Thompson, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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Published under the authority of the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**Tuesday, October 22, 2024****Members Present**

Hon. Caitlin Cleveland, Mr. Edjericon, Mr. Hawkins, Hon. Lucy Kuptana, Hon. Jay Macdonald, Hon. Vince McKay, Mr. McNeely, Ms. Morgan, Mr. Morse, Mr. Nerysoo, Ms. Reid, Mr. Rodgers, Hon. Lesa Semmler, Hon R.J. Simpson, Mr. Testart, Hon. Shane Thompson, Hon. Caroline Wawzonek, Mrs. Weyallon Armstrong, Mrs. Yakeleya

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

Prayer

---Prayer

SPEAKER (Hon. Shane Thompson): Please be seated. I'd like to thank elder Sarah Cleary for our opening blessing. Ministers' statements. Minister of Health and Social Services.

Ministers' Statements

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 65-20(1):
MENTAL WELLNESS SUPPORTS

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to highlight our ongoing work to strengthen the recovery supports available across the Northwest Territories for those struggling with mental wellness, substance use, and addictions. In recent years, that work has evolved to offer more relevant and flexible support to residents. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, more than five million Canadians have faced serious mental health issues. Many people say their mental health has gotten worse, with national data showing increased anxiety and feelings of depression. Suicide remains the second-leading cause of death among youth and young adults across the country. In small, close-knit northern communities, we are directly and profoundly impacted by these experiences as family, friends, and community members.

Mr. Speaker, we know that no single solution or pathway can fully address the unique and evolving needs of the Northwest Territories residents. To provide relevant and sustainable supports that truly respond to these needs, we continue to work with our partners to offer a wide range of formal, informal, and community-led supports while working to reduce barriers to access.

In 2020, a transformation within the community counselling program saw more support tailored towards individual needs. In partnership with the Mental Health Commission of Canada, Stepped Care Solutions, as well as individuals with lived and living experience, and the three

health and social services authorities, we have expanded our services to greatly reduce wait times and improve the accessibility of these services. Several eMental health initiatives have also been made available providing additional options and flexibility to clients. These virtual options, which include distance-based aftercare programming, range from individual supports to supports for children, youth, and their families. The Department of Health and Social Services also funds and promotes a facility-based addictions treatment program, which has recently seen a significant increase in applications from individuals seeking inpatient treatment for substance-related disorders. This is encouraging because it tells us that residents are aware of this resource and are actively pursuing recovery and well-being.

Mr. Speaker, we are also excited to share that two transitional housing programs for addictions recovery are expected to open in Yellowknife and Inuvik within the next year. These programs provide another layer of recovery support and access to sober social networks that are not always available in home communities of those needing these services. While not everyone will need transitional housing as a part of their recovery or aftercare plan, these programs further expand supports for people who do need it. Two community-based funding sources are also available and provide support for mental wellness and addiction recovery through local programs. The Community Suicide Prevention Fund has been fully subscribed for this fiscal year, with over \$760,000 committed to multiple NWT communities; and, the Community Wellness and Addictions Recovery Fund has committed over \$2.5 million to multiple communities. There has been significant interest in accessing these funds to date, and communities are encouraged to continue to apply while funds remain available.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, the range of mental wellness, substance use, and addictions recovery supports available to residents demonstrates our commitment to ensuring their needs are being met in a meaningful and sustainable way. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Health and Social Services. Ministers' statements. Minister of Infrastructure.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 66-20(1):
COST OF ENERGY IN THE NORTHWEST
TERRITORIES

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, the high cost of energy remains one of the greatest challenges for residents and businesses across the Northwest Territories. The realities of our northern environment only amplify these burdens. However, the GNWT is committed to alleviating these pressures through immediate relief and sustainable long-term solutions, paving the way for a more stable and affordable future for all Northerners. As we approach winter many communities, especially in our northernmost regions, face significant financial difficulties in heating their homes and paying their electricity bills. Most residents have little choice but to rely on fossil fuels, which are expensive and have security issues such as price volatility and supply chain disruptions, adding to their financial burden during the coldest months of the year.

The NWT's energy systems are uniquely challenging. Our remoteness, low population density, harsh winters, and limited interconnectivity contribute to high energy costs. In recent years, these costs have been exacerbated by inflation, energy price volatility, and the impacts of climate change. Northwest Territories residents pay the highest electricity rates in Canada, ranging from 25 to 34 cents per kilowatt-hour, which is two to three times more than the national average of 12.9 cents per kilowatt-hour. The cost of gasoline and diesel has also sharply increased, particularly in remote communities, where it is often higher than what the rest of Canada experiences. Many Northerners have shared with me that with this rising cost, living is becoming unsustainable.

Mr. Speaker, I want to explain the steps the GNWT is taking to stabilize energy costs for Northerners and help address this alarming trend. In the past year, the GNWT and its partners spent \$31.7 million to advance the Energy Strategy's vision of providing secure, affordable, and sustainable energy for Northerners. Affordability is a key driver of the initiatives under the Energy Strategy. Energy efficiency plays a major role in affordability. The GNWT funds the Arctic Energy Alliance, helping residents improve their energy efficiency, adopt more cost-effective technologies, and combat energy poverty. In 2023-2024, the GNWT provided \$6.5 million for these programs, resulting in

over 3,000 rebates that helped Northerners reduce heating oil consumption by 365,000 liters annually. This equates to more than \$500,000 in savings for residents across the NWT each year. The majority of these rebates are distributed outside of Yellowknife, particularly in the Beaufort Delta and Sahtu regions, areas that have been impacted the most in recent years due to climate related resupply challenges.

Our aging energy infrastructure is increasingly inadequate to meet the needs of residents and businesses. To address this, the GNWT is advancing several projects to ensure a reliable and affordable energy supply for years to come. For example, transmission line projects continue to be advanced to connect Fort Providence, Kakisa, and Whati to existing hydropower resources, moving these communities away from fossil fuel-based generation and the cost volatility that comes with it. In Inuvik, the recently commissioned wind turbine will displace up to three million liters of diesel each year, helping to stabilize electricity rates. Additionally, the \$4 million fast-charging station corridor being developed around Great Slave Lake will allow Northerners to travel between hydro electric-powered communities using electric vehicles, which are significantly cheaper to operate than traditional cars.

Mr. Speaker, the GNWT is actively supporting residents facing high energy costs or at risk of energy poverty through programs like the territorial power support program, the GNWT rate equalization program, and the senior home heating subsidy. These three programs collectively provided \$10.4 million in direct subsidies to residents in 2023-2024.

The government also supports electricity rates by paying up to 20 percent more for its electricity bill than residents do, a contribution that amounted to \$6.9 million last year. Additionally, these one-time subsidies have been provided, such as the \$30 million in the 2024 budget, to help the Northwest Territories Power Corporation purchase fuel during a time of low water levels, costs that would otherwise have been recovered from ratepayers. Despite these efforts, energy affordability remains an ongoing issue in the Northwest Territories. The \$47 million spent in 2023-2024 helped to alleviate the pressure of rising energy prices, but it is clear that further action is needed. Even with substantial financial support, rate adjustments will be required to maintain system sustainability. Our energy supply and infrastructure are under pressure from factors such as inflation, energy price volatility, and climate change. That is why I have asked the Department of Infrastructure to develop a

renewed approach to energy in the NWT, to be released by the end of 2025-2026. This approach will focus on addressing our energy infrastructure deficit, improving energy affordability, reducing exposure to volatile markets, increasing local energy production, and positioning the NWT as a prime location for resource extraction investment. The new strategy will aim for a net-zero emissions energy system by 2050, delivering long-term benefits for all Northerners.

One of the most promising projects on the horizon is the Taltson Hydro Expansion project, which will increase energy security by interconnecting grids and extending hydroelectric power to industry. The combined grids will provide drought resilience using multiple watersheds with greater hydro capacity and reduce the need to rely on diesel generation during periods of low water on the Snare River system. It will also help meet the growing demand for electrified loads such as electric vehicles. It is expected to reduce emissions, stabilize electricity rates, and provide a more reliable and sustainable energy future for the Northwest Territories. Significant progress has been made on the Taltson expansion, including the selection of a preferred transmission alignment, examination of construction access routes, the completion of a business case, and work on defining commercial aspects of the project. We will continue to collaborate with Indigenous partners to define and support a resolution of legacy issues arising from the construction of the original Taltson facility, finalize the transmission alignment, conduct environmental assessments, and secure federal funding for construction. Indigenous engagement remains a priority throughout this process, ensuring that their knowledge and perspectives are incorporated to minimize the impacts of this project.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, the high cost of energy in the Northwest Territories is a significant burden on residents and businesses, especially in our most remote communities. The GNWT is taking steps to mitigate this burden through a variety of short and long-term initiatives, from energy efficiency programs and direct subsidies, to major infrastructure projects like the Taltson Hydro Expansion. By addressing energy infrastructure deficits, reducing reliance on volatile markets, and increasing the use of locally-produced energy, the GNWT is working to secure a sustainable, reliable, and affordable energy future for Northerners. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Infrastructure. Ministers' statements. Minister for Housing NWT.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 67-20(1):
CAPITAL DELIVERY STATUS UPDATE

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, providing suitable, accessible, and affordable housing is a top priority for this government. Housing NWT is dedicated to delivering quality solutions that address the evolving housing needs of the Northwest Territories' communities and residents. Housing NWT continues to deliver a significant capital plan, including 512 housing units. This will result in 148 new and replacement public housing units, as well as the modernization and improvement of 364 housing assets currently operating throughout the territory.

Housing NWT's large multi-year capital program is currently valued at over \$100 million. These capital projects are primarily funded by significant upfront contributions from the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation and the Crown Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada. By planning strategically, establishing important partnerships, and focusing on operational and environmental sustainability, Housing NWT is implementing these projects to address housing challenges while also creating opportunities for economic growth, capacity development, and local employment.

Mr. Speaker I want to highlight four projects underway:

- The modernization of Aspen Apartments;
- The construction of a mixed-use 50-plex in Yellowknife;
- As well as a biomass heat plant in Fort Simpson; and,
- The completion of five duplexes in multiple communities to support seniors aging in place.

The modernization project for Aspen Apartments, a 36-unit building in Yellowknife, was recently awarded to a local contractor and is expected to be completed by Fall 2025. Housing NWT acquired these apartments in partnership with the city of Yellowknife and Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation under their federal lands and Rapid Housing Initiatives. This project focuses on modernization, key building components such as ventilation and life safety systems and increasing operational efficiency. The project also includes a new biomass heat plant, which is expected to offset approximately 80 percent of the fuel oil historically used to heat the building and produce hot water. This will reduce

greenhouse gas emissions and operating costs, aligning with the objectives of the Housing NWT's energy management strategy. These 36 units will replace units currently leased for the public housing program through a third party, making those units available for others in the private market.

Mr. Speaker, I am also pleased to announce that progress is being made on Housing NWT's new 50-unit multiplex project. Site remediation is scheduled to begin shortly followed by construction scheduled to be completed by Fall 2026. This project, funded through Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation's Rapid Housing Initiative, contributes to the significant expansion of Housing NWT-owned public housing assets within Yellowknife. This project includes 25 barrier-free studio units for seniors, people with mobility challenges, and singles as well as 25 two-bedroom units for small families. This building will have an innovative and efficient mechanical system using a combination of biomass and heat pumps for space heating and cooling with no fossil fuels being used in the heating system. Additionally, the ground floor will include Housing NWT's North Slave district office and the Yellowknife Housing Authority, providing improved client-centered services at a public-facing accessible location.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, with the funding provided from Canada's Low Carbon Economy Fund, Housing NWT is completing a 20-unit biomass project at the Stanley Isaiah Centre in Fort Simpson. This will provide renewable space heat for 20 senior home units and a health facility offsetting 80 percent of the heating requirements currently being provided by fuel oil and reducing fuel oil consumption by nearly 50,000 litres annually.

Mr. Speaker, as a part of housing innovation, five new seniors' duplexes are under construction in Fort McPherson, Tulita, Fort Simpson, Fort Resolution, and Behchoko. Funded with support from Crown Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, these energy-efficient housing units are nearing completion and have been designed with input from a seniors' advisory committee. These units include features that support aging in place such as accessible kitchens, washrooms, entryways, and spaces to support traditional food preparation. Units will enable seniors to age in place in their communities, helping to sustain important community and family networks.

Collaboration with Indigenous governments remains a top priority for Housing NWT. We continue to meet regularly with community leadership to plan and deliver projects,

ensuring alignment with their housing plans. This includes opportunities to coordinate delivery schedules, supporting apprenticeship development, and designing energy efficient resilient units. Housing NWT continues to utilize a range of construction methods including building modular units with northern manufacturers.

Finally, Housing NWT is developing a territorial housing needs assessment to clearly define the housing needs of communities. This assessment will combine data and community input to provide a clear picture of housing challenges, helping to secure much-needed funding support.

As we adapt to changes in the housing landscape, Housing NWT remains committed to collaborating with our various housing partners to address the housing needs of all residents across the territory. Quyananni, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Housing NWT. Ministers' statements. Members' statements. Member from Range Lake.

Members' Statements

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 354-20(1): PARAMEDICS

MR. TESTART: Mr. Speaker, when paramedics are on the job, every second counts because in emergency situations their work can be the deciding factor between a patient's life or death. They stand vigilantly on call to provide vital care and immediate transportation to medical facilities when the need arises, often in complex and traumatic circumstances both in the heart of our communities or on far away remote highways.

Unfortunately, here in the North their job is only made more difficult due to the vast geography of our territory and the limited resources available in the small communities that are spread out across it. Yet regardless of these factors, all Northerners deserve access to these vital emergency services that they need when they need them. Likewise, our indispensable paramedics are always eager to offer their best efforts to support Northerners because they are passionate about keeping our communities healthy and safe. That is why we need to listen to paramedics when they call on us to create more efficient, dedicated, advanced care paramedic services for highways separate from community care paramedic services. A paramedic working on our highways needs more advanced skills and resources than community paramedics

because responding to emergency calls in remote regions means a patient could be hours away from medical care or from hospital staff. When highways taken care of by advanced care paramedics, communities with highways taken care of by advanced care paramedics, community care paramedics could focus only specializing on lower acuity illnesses and injuries and working closer with continuing care staff and physicians to provide additional support for patients in their homes. The benefits of more available specialized care from community care paramedics would result in less pressure on 9-1-1 and emergency room services because illnesses or injuries would be cared for appropriately before they increase in severity and become emergencies.

Northerners know establishing dedicated paramedic services in communities and on our highways should be a priority for this government. It would greatly increase public safety in our remote regions and support health care in all of our communities. It's up to us to make the NWT a safer place no matter where our constituents happen to live, work, or travel. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Range Lake. Members' statements. Member from Great Slave.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 355-20(1):
PREMIER AND MINISTER OF HOUSING
CONSTITUENCY TOUR

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, a week ago I was pleased to host the Premier in his role as the Minister of Justice and the Minister of housing on a tour of my constituency, specifically paying a visit to the encampment and two rental accommodations where single mothers spoke to their concerns around the drug trade and guns in their buildings. I am grateful that the Ministers took the time to see the reality of trying to provide a safe home for families to grow and thrive is very difficult in our capital. Both of these mothers are trying their best to protect their children and seek alternative living arrangements where they hope that they will feel safer.

I know issues like this are top of mind both for us in this House but especially for the Premier who spoke at length at the beginning of our term on his desire to bring forward safer communities and neighbourhoods or SCAN legislation, as well as civil forfeiture and other tools that can provide more avenues to reduce crime in our communities. I appreciate that he considers this more than just a public safety issue but also one of public health and well-being.

A news article I read shared an excellent definition. SCAN legislation aims to improve community safety by allowing neighbours to make complaints to territorial authorities that can then target and shut down properties where illegal activities, such as drug trafficking, habitually occur. It's separate from criminal law and police enforcement which require a higher standard of proof. Earlier this fall, however, the Yukon Supreme Court chief justice struck down a section of that territory's SCAN legislation as unconstitutional. It has to provide five day's notice for landlord assisted evictions of tenants who are suspected to be engaged in illegal activities. The chief justice noted that the section could cause, quote, "extraordinary psychological suffering and risk to a person's health", unquote, as well as lead to housing instability or homelessness. It could also impact residents in a unit such as children or roommates.

We have heard our colleagues speak many times of drug dealers that are praying on our elders and living in their residencies. It's clear that careful consideration of this sort of legislation is required. I am hoping that the Minister of Justice will be able to provide much more detail at the appropriate time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Great Slave. Members' statements. Member from Inuvik Boot Lake.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 356-20(1):
CONGRATULATIONS TO MAYOR AND
COUNCIL OF INUVIK

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the town of Inuvik had their annual -- had their annual -- had their municipal election. We don't do it every year, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to offer my congratulations to the new mayor and council. Certainly mayor-elect Peter Clarkson is no stranger to our community, to our region, and likely to many Members of this House. Peter has long been an advocate for the town of Inuvik. He is a former councillor, a former mayor, and former regional superintendent for the Department of the Executive and Indigenous Affairs, Mr. Speaker.

I'd also like to congratulate our new slate of town councillors:

- Mr. Steve Baryluk,
- Mr. Kendall McDonald,
- Mr. Kurt Wainman,
- Mr. Mario Lemieux,
- Ms. Melinda Gillis,

- Ms. Alana Mero,
- Mr. Ned Day, and
- Ms. Jen Parrott.

Mr. Speaker, we know municipal politics is one of the purist forms of politics, and every issue is an issue that certainly hits close to home. I congratulate both the mayor and council. I wish them the best in their upcoming term. I look forward to working closely with them on the issues that affect our community and certainly my riding and, again, I want to offer my congratulations to them, Mr. Speaker.

I'd also like to thank outgoing member Clarence Wood. Clarence was a long serving member. As you know, he's received awards for his length of service, municipal service, as a long-time town councillor and mayor. Certainly appreciate the work he's done.

I'd like to thank, Mr. Speaker, the councillors who ran for the first time and weren't successful this time around but I'm sure will be back. And thank the incumbent councillors, Mr. Speaker, that weren't as successful this term. Thank you to everyone who puts their name forward for service in their community. It's a difficult job, but we really appreciate them. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Inuvik Boot Lake. Members' statements. Member from the Sahtu.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 357-20(1):
REGIONAL ENERGY RESOURCE TABLES

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to firstly take this opportunity to thank the colleagues in this House here for the support, and the staff, during the recent accomplishment on an immediate reduction to the fuel prices in Norman Wells. So mahsi cho.

Mr. Speaker, we all agree that, what's been said numerous times, the mining sector is the NWT economic backbone, an industry that is in question with statements of closures and reclamation in the planning phases.

Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada, more specifically the federal Department of Natural Resources Canada in 2022, initiated the regional energy resource tables, a strategy in transitioning to a green economy. Mr. Speaker, as quoted by federal Minister Wilkinson, this initiative will enable provinces, territories, and the Government of Canada and key Indigenous partnerships to collectively accelerate economic activity and position Canada as an economic leader in the global shifts towards a low carbon future.

Mr. Speaker, I note that the regional energy and resource tables mentioned, and the federal release helped advance the Yukon and BC exciting developments. Despite being created in October 2022, there has been little to in public news or engagement with stakeholders under the NWT's RERT. Later, Mr. Speaker, I'll have questions for the Minister of Infrastructure. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from the Sahtu. Members' statements. Member from Mackenzie Delta.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 358-20(1):
SOCIAL PROMOTING IN SCHOOLS

MR. NERYSOO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In 1921, Chief Julian Yendo, a great chief of the Teet'it Gwich'in, signed Treaty 11 in hopes of securing a bright future for his people of Teet'it Zheh. Chief Yendo had a great admiration for his people, especially the children. When he signed Treaty 11, one of the clauses that he wanted entrenched in to the document was for the government to build a school within his community and to ensure that the children of the community received the best education that is available to them for many years to come. Today, the vision of this great Chief and the treaties are not being obligated to meet the needs of the students of the community.

Mr. Speaker, we have junior high school students who are incapable of reading or writing at the grade level they are in. The students do not want to learn because they know they will be promoted no matter if they attend only 50 percent of their class time. I believe this trend is happening throughout the Northwest Territories within our smaller communities. I personally know a few parents who are sending their children to different jurisdictions just to get a higher quality of education and a brighter future. This should not be an option. We should be giving our children the best education that they deserve and to look forward to a prosperous future within their communities.

Mr. Speaker, there are a small percentage of students who have the ability to pursue a post-secondary education but, again, they are placed in the same age group as their peers, and they are distracted because the majority of the students do not meet the requirements of their grade. Maybe we should be targeting these select few and giving them the opportunity to pursue a higher level of education and a successful future. These gifted students should be separated and given an instructor who is passionate about seeing positive results. They should at least be given the chance at life.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I would like to say that I sympathize with the students of our smaller communities because their immediate future does not look too bright. I also feel for the teachers who have taken on the task of trying to secure -- Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

---Unanimous consent granted

Thank you, colleagues. I also feel for the teachers who have taken on the task of trying to secure a future for these students but the damage is done, and now they have to work with students who do not want to learn because the education is literally failing them in life. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will have questions for the Minister of education at the appropriate time.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Mackenzie Delta. Members' statements. Member from Monfwi.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 359-20(1):
ALL-SEASON ROAD TO GAMETI

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I would like to talk about how climate change is impacting our ability to get fuel and other resources to our small communities. We have heard from the Member for the Sahtu about the emergency situation air freighting fuel has caused Norman Wells. In Gameti, the winter road system we currently use is vulnerable as well. Typically, Mr. Speaker, people can go back and forth to Gameti from January to March by driving the 213 kilometers winter road from Highway No. 3 near Behchoko. But last year with the short ice road season, optimal conditions on winter roads lasted less than two weeks. Residents need a solution.

Mr. Speaker, the short season makes it difficult to move heavy equipment and discouraging industry. Looking at the five-year average, the opening has been occurring later and later, usually by February 16th. In 2019, the opening date was March 4th. Mr. Speaker, we need to invest in all-weather access roads because small communities are at risk of being further isolated. This problem will drive up the cost of living beyond what is already unaffordable.

Yesterday, the Premier spoke about climate adaptations and isolation in the North. He said that during his recent trip to Ottawa with the Council of Leaders, the development of critical infrastructure, strengthening climate resilience, and creating economic opportunity through resource development were identified as key issues. An all-season road into Gameti will not only help address the impact of climate change

but will also lower the cost of living for the community. It will make economic growth possible.

Mr. Speaker, Gameti lacks transportation infrastructure. With an increasing shorter winter road season and without marine resupply ability, the airport will be the only option left for residents.

MR. SPEAKER: Member from Monfwi --

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

---Unanimous consent granted

Mr. Speaker, we need to be forward-looking. The effects of climate change will continue, and planning for all-weather access roads now will benefit residents and industry in the long-term. I will have questions for the Minister of Infrastructure at the appropriate time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Monfwi. Members' statements. Member from Frame Lake.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 360-20(1):
NEED FOR IMPROVED RESPITE SERVICES

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in September 2022, the Department of Health and Social Services released a supported living review report which highlighted the range of supported living needs of persons with disabilities and the gaps and challenges with how our system is meeting those needs. The report found that the system is complex to access, under-resourced to meet the full range of needs inside the territory, necessitating some residents to be moved south to receive care. The report detailed 33 recommendations, only 12 of which the department fully committed to responding to, citing a lack of resources as the reasons for not committing to the other 21 recommendations.

An area I'd like to focus on today in particular is the need for improved respite services for the residents who are providing in-home support for persons with disabilities who are able to live at home.

In the report, residents providing home support described stress and burnout and emphasized the need for supportive services that would allow them to keep family members at home but be able to lean on extra support when needed. The importance of respite care is it keeps people at home. Over time, it's a much more cost effective and preferred solution to having people end up in full-time care or even be sent

south. The report found that respite services in Yellowknife and the communities is currently limited and recommended increasing overnight options and expanding something respite services in the communities as well. I would like to see a stronger emphasis towards respite services in the territory, Mr. Speaker, and changes to supported living generally which will help us strengthen our supported living services. This is one of the many things we can do to help incentivize people to stay here in the territory, to invest in this place, and make it their home. I'll have questions for the Minister of Health and Social Services at the appropriate time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Frame Lake. Members' statements. Member from Yellowknife North.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 361-20(1):
PRIMARY CARE SYSTEM FRUSTRATIONS

MS. MORGAN: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, one of this Assembly's key mandate commitments is equitable access to sustainable primary care in the NWT. I do believe that this is a sincere commitment. So we should all be alarmed that the primary care system here in Yellowknife, which also serves as an anchor point to many other communities, is on the verge of collapse. I'm hearing from constituents that there is such extreme frustration amongst frontline health care practitioners that a significant number have left their jobs over the past six months and we are in danger of losing the rest. So that's physicians, nurses, NPs, LPNs, and even program assistants.

Over the past year, a major overhaul of primary care was carried out at the same time as a major physical relocation was happening to the Liwego'ati building and not enough care was taken to understand how these changes would impact the day-to-day functioning of primary care practitioners and their patients. As a result, we have taken some major steps backwards in terms of continuity of care and patients' access to doctors. This doesn't seem to have been a temporary blip. It has resulted in lasting chaos, inefficiency, and burnout, not to mention moral distress when physicians are prevented from adequately caring for their patients.

Primary care physicians are telling me that since the overhaul, they've had 50 percent less time in their schedules to see patients. This time must now be spent on paperwork directly caused by the overhaul. The primary care teams were rearranged without meaningful involvement from the practitioners on those teams, resulting in all of the previous physician partner teams being unnecessarily split up. That means that the long-term relationships

physicians developed with their partners' patients due to regular coverage was lost. Larger teams also mean that the program assistants and LPNs must take on bigger burdens which can lead to burnout, and it makes the teams less efficient overall.

This is not just a Yellowknife issue as many primary care practitioners regularly serve communities outside Yellowknife, and it goes far beyond a few grumpy staff who simply don't like change or don't want to be team players. Mr. Speaker, I ask for unanimous consent for my last sentence in the statement. Thank you.

---Unanimous consent granted

Thank you to my colleagues. So we have nurses and doctors with decades of experience who have passionately devoted their entire careers and lives to this territory who now feel so defeated that they're ready to quit. So that means we're in trouble until we start listening to them carefully. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Yellowknife North. Members' statements. Member from the Deh Cho.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 362-20(1):
DEH CHO BRIDGE

MRS. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I would like to talk about the very important piece of infrastructure in our territory which is in my riding, the Deh Cho Bridge. The Deh Cho Bridge is probably one of the territory's largest pieces of infrastructure and the only bridge crossing the Mackenzie River.

Mr. Speaker, in the summer of 2023, the Government of the Northwest Territories discovered that the bridge was damaged. The damage included a broken cable. As a result, traffic is reduced to one lane and there are often line-ups.

Mr. Speaker, constituents in my riding frequently use the Deh Cho Bridge, and they are concerned about the traffic delays and worried about potential safety issues. My constituents aren't the only ones impacted. The bridge is important for many residents of the NWT and for tourism and other industries as this is a year-round highway linking Yellowknife to the south.

Initially, the repair work was supposed to take place this summer; however, this work has not been completed. I made inquiries on the status of the repairs and each time I am told that it will be done soon; however, the work keeps getting pushed back, Mr. Speaker. The government has been aware of this issue for over a year. I

will have questions for the Minister of Infrastructure later. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from the Deh Cho. Members' statements. Member from Yellowknife Centre.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 363-20(1):
CHILD AND YOUTH SAFETY CONCERNS

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This July an email was sent to the Department of Health and Social Services. Seven GNWT employees were included on that email. One of them in particular, Mr. Speaker, was the CEO of NT Health and Social Services so I know the department has it at the toppest -- sorry, at the top of the highest officials we have.

Mr. Speaker, I won't name the particular facility, but it was highlighting something very serious. The subject matter in part reads: Urgent, child and youth safety concerns at... I won't fill in the rest. And the email then begins, Mr. Speaker -- and I take a small excerpt out of it. It says, I am writing to you today with a serious concern, safety risk to children and youth that are occurring.

Mr. Speaker, now when it comes to our most vulnerable, whether it's our youth, whether it's our elderly, or those who require special supports, I think it's fair to say all hands-on deck is the right approach. It's not only warranted; it's demanded, Mr. Speaker. So I know this email was received by the CEO, Mr. Speaker, and it highlights in the email that there may be human rights issues, abuse, and neglect. Mr. Speaker, I repeat myself. There may be human rights issues, abuse, and neglect. In that email, it had several items attached that the concerned citizen brought forward and citing as this is information you may need.

Mr. Speaker, this is quite distressing for someone like myself because thinking about our most vulnerable may be trapped in a particular situation and, more so, it bothers me that the department may be taking a lackadaisical approach on how to investigate this and furthermore demonstrates some level of transparency to these concerns. I don't know if they're facts, but they're concerned enough to put them in writing to the department, Mr. Speaker. That should be a minimum standard, a standard of saying maybe we should look into this. At the same time, this also provides those in the system to clarify any concerns. They may be a misunderstanding but I'm not the person to judge.

Now this narrative, Mr. Speaker, I highlight does cause further concerns. I go back, human rights, abuse, and neglect.

There is disclosure rules under the Child and Family Services Act, Mr. Speaker, but it does seem to read pretty silent when it comes to reporting these to the RCMP. So, Mr. Speaker, to help us avoid lifelong -- the lifelong journey of despair and trauma of individuals, I'll be asking the Minister about when the RCMP should be playing a role on this particular concern highlighted. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Yellowknife Centre. Members' statements.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 364-20(1):
CELEBRATION OF LIFE – STEPHANIE
SQUIRREL

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Good afternoon, colleagues. Today, I would like to celebrate the life of Stephanie "Sweet Pea" Squirrel. She was born on September 15th, 1988, to Loretta and Steve Squirrel. She was the youngest of five children.

Stephanie attended school in Fort Simpson. I can remember the first time I met her. It was in Grade 1, and she attended school with my daughter. It is interesting what you remember of youth when they are young. What struck me about Stephanie was her smile, energy, and willingness to always want to help her classmates. As she grew up, this was what people saw. She was always there looking after others, especially young children.

I can tell you, three of my grandchildren were always excited to see her, whether it was on the street or at daycare. They spoke about how nice she was, and I witnessed her pure kindness and care she would give to them. Unfortunately, she passed away on August 3rd, 2024, at the young age of 35.

On Monday, August 19th, the family had a Celebration of Life. Two of her best friends, Jocelyn Kierstead and Brittany Hardisty-Isaiah did her eulogy. I have attached them at the end of this speech and would like them deemed as read and printed in Hansard.

What I can tell you, they both spoke about how full of life she was. Always thinking of others, especially the young children, whether they were her nieces, nephews, friends' children, or ones from the daycare. She wanted them to enjoy life and make the most of things. The other that that jumped out at me from their eulogy, the first being, live in the moment. Sometimes you don't do what you plan on doing, like going out but end up in bed watching movies, chatting and dancing with your best friend into all hours of the night, and it being the best time.

The second thing was family time and the willingness to go on adventures with them and loved ones. Whether it was done with trips to Edmonton, Vegas, Mexico, or at the snye or visiting friends or family at home. You can always have fun and enjoy the company you are with regardless of where you are. This was who Stephanie was.

Her family and her boyfriend would like to thank all the people who were able to come to her Celebration of Life and all the condolences from people who were not able to attend. My condolences go out to the family. She will be sadly missed by us all.

Eulogy for Stephanie M. Squirrel (Jocelyn Kierstead and Brittany Hardisty Isaiah):

Stephanie (sweet pea) was a kind, loving, funny, selfless, beautiful soul. This isn't even a fraction of what I can say of who she was as a person, if anyone knew her, she was so much more than words can describe. She was an amazing at everything and an amazing friend, always there to have a shoulder to cry on, made you feel so comfortable and warm. She could always brighten up any room with her contagious smile and incredibly wicked humour but can also smack the Band-Aid off someone if you needed her to. I'll always remember the days we would make plans and end up staying in bed watching movies and singing and laughing all night.

Stephanie had a place in her heart for all children in her care as if they were her own. She was passionate about providing a safe, nurturing space for them. From the kids at the daycare to her many nieces, nephews, and little cousins. Steph had an abundance of love and patience for children.

As the youngest of 5 siblings, she earned her nickname of sweet pea and baby and was adored by those who knew her. Stephanie looked up to her big sisters, was protected by her older brothers, adored her father, and was devoted to loving and caring for her mother. Like most of us in a small community, Steph had a lot of cousins she grew up with that were like siblings. Family time and values are things Stephanie treasured. From trips to Edmonton, to birthdays, holidays, and weddings, she could always be found at the family gatherings.

Steph was never one to miss out on an opportunity to have fun and adventure whether it was a Las Vega trip with her sisters and Aunt, to a wedding vacation in Mexico, or a trip down to the snye floating bridge with her pops.

Steph's interest in astrology and her own zodiac sign reflected in her personality; humble, grounded, self-sufficient. She even has a tattoo

of the Virgo constellation. I'd like to thank you for joining us to celebrate her life here on Earth, now she is our own STAR in the sky full of constellations.

Members' statements. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member from the Sahtu.

Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to welcome two pages from the community of Deline, Ehtseo Ayha School. Their names are Matthew Bond and Evelyn Gaudet. Welcome to the Assembly. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Recognition of visitors in the gallery. If we missed anyone in the gallery today, welcome to your chamber. I hope you're enjoying the proceedings. It is always nice to see people in the gallery. Oh, Member from Yellowknife North.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just wanted to recognize Yellowknife North constituent Yuma McEachern who is helping us out as a page this week. So thanks so much, Yuma, for all your help.

MR. SPEAKER: Recognition of visitors in had the gallery. Reports of committees on the review of bills. Reports of standing and special committees. Member from Frame Lake.

Reports of Standing and Special Committees

COMMITTEE REPORT 10-20(1):
REPORT ON THE REVIEW OF THE 2023-2024 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES INFORMATION AND PRIVACY COMMISSIONER, DEEMED READ, RECEIVED, AND ADOPTED. RESPONSE FROM GOVERNMENT REQUESTED, CARRIED

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's going to be another marathon for Standing Committee on Government Operations. Mr. Speaker, your Standing Committee on Government Operations is pleased to provide its Report on the Review of the 2023-2024 Annual Report of the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner.

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Great Slave, that Committee Report 10-20(1), Standing Committee on Government Operations Report on the Review of the 2023-2024 Annual Report of the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner be

deemed read and printed in Hansard in its entirety. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Frame Lake. Reports on standing and special committees -- oh, sorry. Motion is in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. All those in favour? Opposed? Abstentions? Motion is passed.

---Carried

MR. MORSE: Standing committee on government operations report on the review of the 2023-2024 annual report of the northwest territories information and privacy commissioner

Introduction

The Standing Committee on Government Operations (Committee) has reviewed the 2023-2024 Annual Report of the Northwest Territories Information and Privacy Commissioner (Commissioner). The Committee thanks Mr. Andrew Fox, Information and Privacy Commissioner, for his appearance before Committee on September 12, 2024.

The Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (ATIPPA) and the Health Information Act (HIA) require the Commissioner to prepare an annual report. The Speaker tables the report in the Legislative Assembly; once tabled, Committee reviews it.

The Commissioner's 2023-2024 report includes an assessment of the effectiveness of the Act, a report on the Office's activities, and recommendations for consideration by the Legislative Assembly. The Commissioner's work and recommendations are reflected in Committee's observations.

About The Information And Privacy Commissioner

The Information and Privacy Commissioner is a Statutory Officer of the Legislative Assembly. The Commissioner's primary functions involve:

- Receiving and reviewing complaints about breaches of privacy
- Receiving and reviewing complaints about the adequacy of public bodies' responses to access to information requests
- Reviewing Privacy Impact Assessments (PIAs), and

- Reviewing and commenting on proposed legislation regarding possible implications for privacy protection or access to government information

Observations

Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act

The Commissioner made two recommendations in the annual report concerning the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (ATIPPA). Additional details about each recommendation can be found in the 2023-2024 annual report:

1. That the government should consider amending ATIPPA to allow a public body to extend the time once for the period required to complete third-party consultation without authorization by the Commissioner. For subsequent extensions, public bodies should continue to seek authorization from the Commissioner.

2. That public bodies should review their legal obligations to respond to access to information requests and assess their capacity to provide timely responses within the legislated time periods. They should collectively or individually ensure that the Access and Privacy Office (APO) is adequately resourced to assist public bodies in consistently meeting legal time frames and complying with the associated procedural requirements.

Committee acknowledges and supports the Commissioner's recommendations concerning the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act. Therefore, Committee recommends that:

Recommendation 1: The Standing Committee on Government Operations recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories provide a timeframe for implementing the Information and Privacy Commissioner's two recommendations related to the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act.

Delay in Responding to Access Requests

During the September 12, 2024, public briefing, the Commissioner expressed concerns about the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT)'s struggles to meet the legislated timeframes in responding to information requests. The APO is responsible for accepting requests from individuals applying for access to information and correction of personal information. Once the APO receives a request, they work with the relevant public body to retrieve the required records. The Commissioner brought forward to Committee

that they believe delays are resulting from the time needed to clarify requests from public bodies and the ongoing issue that the APO lacks resources needed for the timely response to access to information requests within the legislated periods. It was noted by the Commissioner that wording within legislation remains clear and that no specific legislative changes are needed at this time that would help reduce the APO's workload.

Open Government

In 2019, Bill 29: Act to Amend the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (Act) updated Section 72 to obligate public bodies to identify the types of records without personal information and can, therefore, be made available to the public without the need for a formal access request under the Act.

In addition, the GNWT committed to increasing openness, transparency, and accountability by embracing the "Open Government" movement and publicly releasing the Open Government Policy.

The Open Government Policy outlines actions to advance the GNWT's commitment to the principles of Open Government in three key areas:

Open Information

Open Information is the proactive release of government-held information in accessible and user-friendly formats. The Proactive Disclosure Directive (Directive), signed in July 2023, outlines information categories and guides public bodies on maximizing information disclosure.

Committee believes that information and documents outlined in the Directive are not being released proactively by the GNWT (for example, Committee is unaware of internal audit and evaluation reports being disclosed). For these reasons, Committee is recommending that:

Recommendation 2: The Standing Committee on Government Operations recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories provide the date by which all information and documents identified in the Proactive Disclosure Directive will be released and updated.

Recommendation 3: The Standing Committee on Government Operations recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories review and update the Proactive Disclosure Directive to maximize the release of information. Furthermore, Committee requests a date by which this review will be completed.

Open Data

The Open Data Portal (opendata.gov.nt.ca) is designed to make government-held data, including datasets, facts, figures, and statistics, available to the public in accessible and user-friendly formats. As of October 16, 2024, the Portal includes 340 datasets. However, it remains unclear which information resources are to be open and released, what decision processes govern the release of open data, and what efforts departments have made to maximize data release.

Organization	Total
Bureau of Statistics	290
Education, Culture and Employment	4
Environment and Climate Change	12
Executive and Indigenous Affairs	7
Finance	2
Health and Social Services	2
Industry, Tourism and Investment	2
Infrastructure	9
Justice	10
Municipal and Community Affairs	2
Total	340

Recommendation 4: The Standing Committee on Government Operations recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories provide:

1. A Directive on Open Government to maximize the release of government information and data of business value to support transparency, accountability, and citizen engagement.
2. Departmental Open Government Implementation Plans that outline departmental direction, strategies, and initiatives undertaken to meet the requirements of the Open Government Policy.
3. Inventories of all data and information resources of business value held by each department with determinations of eligibility and priority and the plan for effective release.
4. Periodic progress reports.

If these directives and guidelines do not yet exist, Committee requests a date by which they will be created and implemented.

Open Dialogue

Open Dialogue refers to the availability of a diverse range of engagement activities designed to facilitate meaningful participation of residents, communities, and organizations in government decision-making processes.

Committee recognizes the 2022 Public Engagement Employee Guide as a significant step toward establishing a unified approach in providing resources to support public engagement. Committee is eager in seeing the success of Open Dialogue and therefore recommends:

Recommendation 5: The Standing Committee on Government Operations recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories provide to Committee and publish all evaluation worksheets/reports from public engagement evaluation since the Public Engagement Employee Guide was released in July 2022.

Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority Privacy Breach Policy:

The current practice for health information custodians, such as the Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority (NTHSSA), is to delay notification of privacy breaches until a full investigation is completed, which often takes several months. This is inconsistent with the Health Information Act (HIA), which requires notice to be provided as soon as reasonably possible after a breach is confirmed. The delay in giving notice prevents individuals from taking timely action to protect their privacy. The Commissioner argues that notice should be given as soon as a privacy breach is confirmed rather than waiting for the full investigation to conclude, as this better aligns with the Health Information Act's intent. The Commissioner recommends in their 2023-2024 report:

- That the Health and Social Services Privacy Breach Policy should be amended to require notice to be given to the affected individual(s) and the Information and Privacy Commissioner as soon as reasonably possible once a privacy breach has been confirmed.

Committee recognizes the gap highlighted by the Commissioner between the NTHSSA policy and the HIA. Therefore, Committee is recommending the following:

Recommendation 6: The Standing Committee on Government Operations recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories work with the Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority to amend their Privacy Breach Policy to better align with the Health Information Act's intent.

Health Information Act

The Commissioner made seven recommendations in the annual report concerning the Health Information Act. Additional details about each recommendation can be found in the 2023-2024 annual report:

1. That the Department of Health and Social Services should consider implementing a policy, or the government should consider amending the Health Information Act, to require health information custodians to report to the Commissioner regarding the implementation of accepted recommendations.

2. That Health Information Custodians should continue to reduce or eliminate the use of fax machines to transmit personal health information.

3. That Health Information Custodians should use secure electronic transmission measures when transmitting personal health information. Privacy training for employees should include detailed instructions on using secure electronic measures.

4. That Health Information Custodians should prioritize implementation of, and compliance with, the Mandatory Training Policy and ensure that appropriate privacy training is provided for new employees, returning employees, and for all employees annually.

5. That the Legislative Assembly should consider amending the section amending section 87 of the Health Information Act to require a Health Information Custodian to give notice of a privacy breach within a specific time period. (Pg 19)

6. That Privacy Impact Assessments addressing any new information system or communication technology that involves the collection, use, or disclosure of personal health information should be completed and submitted so that there is a reasonable period for review by the Information and Privacy Commissioner and for any comments to be considered by the Health Information Custodian in the planning stages before implementation.

7. That the Legislative Assembly should consider amending Section 89 of the Health Information Act to include similar provisions regarding Privacy Impact Assessments as mandated in section 42.1 of ATIPP.

Committee acknowledges and supports the Commissioner's recommendations concerning the Health Information Act. Therefore, Committee is recommending the following:

Recommendation 7: The Standing Committee on Government Operations recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories provide a timeframe for implementing the Information and Privacy Commissioner's seven recommendations related to the Health Information Act.

Conclusion

This concludes the Standing Committee on Government Operations Report on the Review of the 2023-2024 Annual Report of the Northwest Territories Information and Privacy Commissioner.

Recommendation 8: The Standing Committee on Government Operations recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories respond to the recommendations contained in this report within 120 days.

Reports on standing and special committees.
Member from Frame Lake.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Great Slave, that Committee Report 10-20(1), Standing Committee on Government Operations Report on the Review of the 2023-2024 Annual Report of the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner, be received and adopted by the Assembly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Frame Lake. The motion is in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. All those in favour? Opposed? Abstentions? Motion has passed.

---Carried

Reports on standing and special committees.
Member from Frame Lake.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Great Slave, that pursuant to Rule 9.4(5)(a), the Government of the Northwest Territories table a comprehensive response to this report, including all recommendations, within 120 days or at the earliest opportunity subsequent to the passage of 120 days. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Frame Lake. Motion's in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. All those in favour? Opposed? Abstentions? Motion has passed.

---Carried

Reports of Standing and Special Committees.
Member from Frame Lake.

COMMITTEE REPORT 11-20(1):
REPORT ON THE REVIEW OF THE 2023-
2024 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES EQUAL PAY
COMMISSIONER, RECEIVED AND
ADOPTED. RESPONSE FROM
GOVERNMENT REQUESTED,
CARRIED

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, your Standing Committee on Government Operations would like to Report on its Review of the 2023-2024 Annual Report of the Equal Pay Commissioner. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, your Standing Committee on Government Operations is pleased to provide its Report on the Review of the 2023-2024 Annual Report of the Northwest Territories Equal Pay Commissioner, and commends it to the House.

Mr. Speaker, your Standing Committee on Government Operations has reviewed the 2023-2024 Annual Report of the Northwest Territories Equal Pay Commissioner, which will be referred to from now as the "annual report."

The committee thanks Ms. Renée Caron, recently appointed Equal Pay Commissioner, for her appearance before committee on August 29th, 2024. In the Northwest Territories, the right to equal pay for work of equal value is established by Section 40 of the Public Service Act and applies to public service employees. The Act requires the Equal Pay Commissioner to prepare an annual report. The 2023-2024 Annual Report highlights the context for the Commissioner's work and her activities over the year. Committee wishes to express our heartfelt sympathy to the family and friends of Bronwyn Watters, the former Equal Pay Commissioner, who passed away unexpectedly in the summer of 2023.

About the NWT Equal Pay Commissioner:

Section 40 of the Public Service Act requires that there be no difference in the rate of pay between male and female employees who perform work of equal value in the same establishment. Under the Act, three separate establishments exist:

- The government,
- The NWT power corporation, and
- Teachers.

The Equal Pay Commissioner is responsible for:

- Investigating complaints from employees who believe that their right to equal pay for work of equal value has been violated.
- Promoting awareness and understanding of equal pay for work of equal value.

Observations

The Northwest Territories stands as a leader in minimizing pay inequity. According to the most recent Statistics Canada census (2021), in the Northwest Territories:

- The median wage for tax filers identifying as male was \$65,300.
- The median wage for tax filers identifying as female was \$59,610.

These wages represent one of the smallest gender pay gaps in Canada, which the average of which is 74 percent behind only Nunavut. However, committee urges the government to avoid complacency.

Diversity, equity, and inclusion discussions often focus on traditionally marginalized groups in isolation. For example, the GNWT has policies that promote mentorship opportunities for Indigenous peoples and training to improve 2SLGBTQIA+ workplace awareness. These efforts are important; however, committee argues they are overly simplistic.

An Intersectional Approach To Pay Equity

Intersectionality is critical to understanding pay equity because it allows us to delve deeper into the multiple factors or demographics that impact compensation rather than focusing on individual factors in isolation. By design, focusing on the average wages across all women may mask disparities that exist when individual experiences or demographics are not incorporated. The United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission noted that "pay inequity is not solely an issue of sex discrimination, but an intersectional issue that cuts across race, colour, national origin, and other protected classes." An intersectional approach to pay equity necessarily goes beyond comparing the average earnings of men and women.

A Statistics Canada study, Intersectional Perspective on the Canadian Gender Wage Gap, found that in 2022, compared to the average hourly wage for Canadian-born men:

- Women who immigrated to Canada as children earn 10.5 percent less;
- Women who immigrated to Canada as adults earned 20.9 percent less;

The comparison of average earnings at the intersection of gender and Indigenous status shows that Indigenous women and men earn less than non- Indigenous men and women;

- Women who identify with a racialized group earn significantly less than the average male;
- Persons with disabilities have lower wages and are more likely to work part-time leading to lower average weekly earnings;
- Neurodivergent individuals are more likely to be underemployed, with lower potential earnings versus their neurotypical peers.

Committee believes that the GNWT's current one-dimension approach, based on just gender, misses the full picture. Intersectionality is key to achieving pay equity because it recognizes that individuals experience discrimination and inequality based on the intersection of multiple identities and demographic markers such as race, gender, and age.

During the life of this Assembly, the Government of the Northwest Territories plans to bring forward amendments to the Public Service Act making now an ideal time for the government to consider intersectionality issues surrounding pay equity and propose changes to the legislation. Therefore:

Recommendation 1: The Standing Committee on Government Operations recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories, in collaboration with the Pay Equity Commissioner, review the pay equity provisions of the Public Service Act and bring forward amendments to address how intersectionality impacts pay equity.

Proactive Pay Equity

Collective bargaining and job evaluation systems support pay equity. The GNWT uses the Hay Method of job evaluation as a gender-neutral evaluation system that assesses jobs based on skill, effort, responsibility, and working conditions. However, committee learned that collective bargaining and job evaluation cannot be the sole mechanisms to ensure pay equity.

The 2023-2024 Annual Report points out that "equal pay for work of equal value must be demonstrably established and maintained over time... Maintenance requires a systemic review every few years."

In August 2021, the federal government brought the federal Pay Equity Act into force. The federal Act establishes a proactive pay equity regime for federally regulated workplaces with ten or more employees. Under this regime, employers must proactively examine their compensation practices. The central feature of proactive pay equity is that it requires employers to establish and periodically update a pay equity plan rather than relying on reactive complaints to address and resolve issues.

Recommendation 2: The Standing Committee on Government Operations recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories, in collaboration with the Pay Equity Commissioner, review the pay equity provisions of the Public Service Act and bring forward amendments to require regular maintenance reviews or proactive pay equity plans.

Conclusion

This concludes the Standing Committee on Government Operations Report on the Review of the 2023-2024 Annual Report of the Northwest Territories Equal Pay Commissioner.

Recommendation 3: The Standing Committee on Government Operations recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories provide a response to the recommendations contained in this report within 120 days.

So, Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Great Slave, that Committee Report 11-20(1), Standing Committee on Government Operations Report on the 2023-2024 Annual Report of the Northwest Territories Equal Pay Commissioner, be received and adopted by the Assembly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Frame Lake. To the motion. Motion's order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. All those in favour? Opposed? Abstentions? Motion has passed.

---Carried

Member from Frame Lake.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Great Slave, that pursuant to Rule 9.4(5)(a), the Government of the Northwest Territories table a comprehensive response to this report, including all recommendations, within 120 days or at the earliest opportunity subsequent to the passage of 120 days. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion's in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. All those in favour? Opposed? Abstentions? Motion has passed.

---Carried

Member from Frame Lake.

COMMITTEE REPORT 12-20(1):
REPORT ON THE REVIEW OF THE 2023-
2024 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES HUMAN
RIGHTS COMMISSION, DEEMED READ,
RECEIVED, AND ADOPTED. RESPONSE
FROM GOVERNMENT REQUESTED,
CARRIED

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Your Standing Committee on Government Operations is pleased to provide its Report on the Review of the 2023-2024 Annual Report of the Northwest Territories Human Rights Commission.

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Great Slave, that Committee Report 12-20(1), Standing Committee on Government Operations Report on the Review of the 2023-2024 Annual Report of the Northwest Territories Human Rights Commission, be deemed read and printed in Hansard in its entirety. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Frame Lake. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. All those in favour? Those opposed? Absences? Motion has passed.

---Carried

Mr. Morse: Standing Committee on Government Operations Report on the Review of The 2023-2024 Annual Report of The Northwest Territories Human Rights Commission

Introduction

The Standing Committee on Government Operations (Committee) has reviewed the 2023-2024 Annual Report of the Northwest Territories Human Rights Commission (Annual Report).¹ The Committee thanks Mr. Charles Dent, Ms. Nicole MacNeil, and Mr. Sheldon Toner for their appearance before the Committee on August 26, 2024.²

The Human Rights Act requires the Human Rights Commission (Commission) to prepare an annual report.³ The 2023-2024 report highlights the Commission's focus on community outreach, resolving complaints filed under the Human Rights Act, and continuing advocacy for accessibility legislation.

Committee is providing two recommendations to the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) regarding the implementation of legislation that improves accessibility for the people of the Northwest Territories.

About the Human Rights Commission

The NWT Human Rights Commission works to promote equality human rights and protect individuals and groups from discrimination under the NWT Human Rights Act. The Act creates a human rights system that is independent from the territorial government.

The human rights system in the Northwest Territories is committed to using a restorative approach and is guided by the principles of flexibility, inclusion, remediation and participatory solutions to issues. It is against the law to discriminate against anyone in the following areas:

The NWT Human Rights Act protects 22 grounds: age, disability, race, colour, ancestry, place of origin, ethnic origin, nationality, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, family status, family affiliation, marital status, social condition, religion, creed, political belief, political association, pardoned criminal conviction, or record suspension.

Observations

Public Hearing

Committee is excited to see the results of the Commission's work to understand how their processes are working for the people of the Northwest Territories (NWT), particularly the Commission's Reconciliation Strategy and work plan to improve services to Indigenous Peoples.

Committee is eager to learn more about the Commission's research into non-disclosure agreement (NDA) legislation that has been a topic of concern across Canada. In addition, Committee appreciated the conversation about protected grounds and looks forward to the Commission's review of protected grounds.

Accessibility Legislation

Accessibility means full and equal participation for all peoples in our communities, with the physical, information, attitudinal, and systemic barriers removed so people can participate in day-to-day activities or participate in opportunities available to all citizens. An accessible and inclusive territory benefits all of us.

As of 2022, there are more than 8,000 NWT residents over the age of 15 with some form of disability, representing 25.7% of the population.⁴ As the population ages, the number of people with disabilities and the severity of their disabilities are likely to increase.

For years, the Human Rights Commission and Committee have called on the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) to develop accessibility legislation. While existing human rights laws, such as the NWT Human Rights Act and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, allow people to make individual complaints when their rights are violated, they often have limited ability to address systemic problems.

The NWT does not have comprehensive legislation to help identify, remove, and prevent barriers experienced by persons with disabilities. In addition to the federal government's Accessible Canada Act (2019), eight provinces, Quebec (2004), Ontario (2005), Manitoba (2013), Nova Scotia (2017), Newfoundland and Labrador (2021), British Columbia (2021), Saskatchewan (2023), and New Brunswick (2024) currently have accessibility legislation in place.

Committee strongly believes that it is a function of good government to safeguard and advance the dignity of all persons, including persons with disabilities. Accessibility legislation could create mechanisms, such as accessibility standards and regulations, to address systemic barriers. Therefore:

Recommendation 1: The Standing Committee on Government Operations recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories develop accessibility legislation that identifies, removes, and prevents barriers encountered by people with disabilities in their daily lives through the

development, implementation, and enforcement of accessibility standards.

Accessibility standards should provide guidance about best practices for accessibility, including desired accessibility outcomes. Standards should cover a variety of areas including service delivery, employment, the built environment, information and communication, and transportation.

Committee was pleased to hear that the GNWT is planning some work around improving accessibility in the built environment:

1. In June 2024, the Minister of Infrastructure committed to "looking into a building standards framework for the territory that includes an accessibility provision." The Minister's further commitment to begin working on a Building Act in 2025-26 is also welcome news.⁵

2. Adoption of the 2020 National Building Code (NBC:2020) through Fire Prevention Act regulations amendments. NBC 2020 includes some updated accessibility requirements to reduce barriers related to anthropometrics, plumbing facilities, signage, entrances, and elevators.⁶

However, Committee is concerned that the government's plans do not go far enough to address existing accessibility issues in the built environment. Committee learned that building codes often do not align with requirements to make a building accessible, nor will the adoption of NBC:2020 address building accessibility for private owners, private builders, or within municipalities.

CSA B651:23 – Accessible design for the built environment⁷ is recognized as the most comprehensive description of accessible building practices in Canada. The standard describes the technical requirements for designing and constructing new facilities or exterior environments or modifying existing facilities or exterior environments.

Integrating CSA B651:23 into legislation to make buildings and the exterior built environment safe for those with physical, sensory, or cognitive disabilities could help ensure that builders, private owners, and municipal governments are protected from discrimination claims.

Recommendation 2: The Standing Committee on Government Operations recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories integrate CSA B651:23 into the recommended accessibility legislation.

Conclusion

This concludes the Standing Committee on Government Operations Report on the Review of the 2023-2024 Annual Report of the Northwest Territories Human Rights Commission. Committee eagerly awaits the government's response to Committee's recommendations in CR 5-20(1) Report on the Review of the 2022-2023 Annual Report of the Human Rights Commission,⁸ and respectively recommends that:

Recommendation 3: The Standing Committee on Government Operations recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories provide a response to the recommendations contained in this report within 120 days.

Mr. Speaker: Member from Frame Lake.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Great Slave, that Committee Report 12-20(1), Standing Committee on Government Operations Report on the Review of the 2023-2024 Annual Report of the Northwest Territories Human Rights Commission, be received and adopted by the Assembly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Frame Lake. Motion's in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. All those in favour? Opposed? Absences? Motion has passed.

---Carried

Member from Frame Lake.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Great Slave, that pursuant to Rule 9.4(5)(a), the Government of the Northwest Territories table a comprehensive response to this report, including all recommendations, within 120 days or at the earliest opportunity subsequent to the passage of 120 days.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. The motion is in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. All those in favour? Opposed? Abstentions? Motion has passed.

---Carried

Member from Frame Lake.

COMMITTEE REPORT 13-20(1):
REPORT ON THE REVIEW OF THE 2023-
2024 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES OFFICIAL
LANGUAGES COMMISSIONER, RECEIVED
AND ADOPTED. RESPONSE FROM
GOVERNMENT REQUESTED,
CARRIED

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Your Standing Committee on Government Operations is pleased to provide its Report on the Review of the 2023-2024 Annual Report of the Northwest Territories Languages Commissioner. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Frame Lake.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Your Standing Committee on Government Operations is pleased to provide its Report on the Review of the 2023-2024 Annual Report of the Northwest Territories Languages Commissioner and commends it to the House.

The Standing Committee on Government Operations has reviewed the 2023-2024 Annual Report of the Northwest Territories Languages Commissioner. The committee thanks Ms. Brenda Gauthier, NWT Languages Commissioner, for her appearance before the committee on August 29, 2024.

The Official Languages Act requires the Languages Commissioner to prepare an annual report.

The 2023-2024 report highlights the Commissioner's focus on community outreach, investigating complaints and inquiries, and continued advocacy for the Government of the Northwest Territories Indigenous Languages and Education Secretariat to mirror the services provided by the Francophone Affairs Secretariat.

About the Office of the Languages Commissioner

The Commissioner has a narrow scope to investigate complaints that violate the Act and to promote the Office of the Languages Commissioner. The Northwest Territories has eleven official languages:

- English,
- French,
- Chipewyan,
- South Slavey,

- North Slavey,
- Gwich'in,
- Inuinnaqtun,
- Inuktitut,
- Inuvialuktun,
- Cree, and
- Tlicho.

Observations

Review Indigenous Languages Service Offerings

The Commissioner put forward two recommendations in the 2023-2024 Annual Report. The first recommendation is repeated from last year and called on the Government of the Northwest Territories to mirror the Indigenous Languages and Education Secretariat to the Francophone Affairs Secretariat. Committee agreed with this recommendation and submitted it for the GNWT's consideration in Committee Report 4-20(1), Report on the Review of the 2022-2023 Annual Report of the Northwest Territories Languages Commissioner. Committee anticipates the government's response to this recommendation in the Fall 2024 session of the Legislative Assembly.

Providing Services in All Official Languages

The second recommendation of the Commissioner is that the GNWT do more to provide services in all official languages in government institutions in all communities. One way to accomplish this is to collaborate with Indigenous regional governments.

The Official Languages Act, 11(2), states that any member of the public in the Northwest Territories has the right to communicate with and to receive services from any regional, area, or community office of a government institution in an official language other than English or French spoken in that region or community, where

- A. There is a significant demand for communications and services from the office in that language; or
- B. It is reasonable, given the nature of the office, that communications with and services from it be available in that language.

However, committee notes that there is no definition of "significant demand," nor are any communities identified as having "significant

demand" for Indigenous languages in the Official Languages Act Government Institutions Regulations. Therefore:

Recommendation 1: The Standing Committee on Government Operations recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories define the term "significant demand." Appendix A of the Official Languages Guidelines Manual, published in 1997, outlines designated geographic areas for the use of official languages by the GNWT. While updating these guidelines is an action identified in the current NWT Indigenous Languages Action Plan, committee is not aware of the GNWT delivering services to the public in any official Indigenous languages in designated areas at this time.

Recommendation 2: The Standing Committee on Government Operations recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories prioritize Action 2.1 of the Indigenous Languages Action Plan to update official languages regulations, policies, and guidelines as soon as possible. According to the 2021 Statistics Canada census, 5,385 people in the NWT (which is 13.2 percent of the population) reported speaking an Indigenous language. In comparison, just over 1 in 10 people (or 10.8 percent) could conduct a conversation in French in 2021. The municipalities with a population of more than 500 that had the highest proportion of people who spoke French were in Yellowknife, Hay River, and Norman Wells. Meanwhile, the Government Institution Regulations identify Fort Smith, Hay River, Inuvik, and Yellowknife as having significant demand for communications with and services to the public in both English and French.

Recommendation 3: The Standing Committee on Government Operations recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories update the Government Institution Regulations to accurately reflect the requirements of Section 11 of the Official Languages Act by specifying:

1. Which head or central offices in which communities are required to communicate with and provide services in English and French
2. Which regional area or community offices in which communities are required to communicate with and provide services in which Indigenous languages.

In 1984, the Government of Canada partnered with the GNWT to fund Indigenous languages programming and services in the territory. Since 2017, the GNWT has received \$5.9 million each year under the Canada-NWT

Cooperation Language Agreement to support Indigenous languages programs and initiatives. Of that funding, \$4.9 million goes directly to Indigenous governments to support the development of Indigenous languages plans and community-based revitalization programs. The GNWT uses the remaining portion of the funding to deliver the Mentor-Apprenticeship Program, Indigenous Language Revitalization Scholarships, and to administer the funding agreement.

Committee recognizes the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Call to Action 14.4 which states that the preservation, revitalization, and strengthening of Aboriginal languages and cultures are best managed by Indigenous people and communities. However, committee also strongly believes that active reconciliation requires ongoing support and engagement. As such, simply passing along funding to Indigenous governments does not allow the GNWT to abdicate its responsibility to actively provide services and programming to our residents in the official languages of the NWT.

As stated in the 2017 NWT Indigenous Languages Framework, Every NWT resident has the right to access the same high-quality public services. In the NWT, there are nine official Indigenous languages alongside English and French. Currently, speakers of the NWT's official Indigenous languages do not have equitable access to services in their language. The goal of language access speaks to the need for all people to be able to use and benefit from high-quality public services in all official languages, including Aboriginal languages. Public services include things like health care, justice, legislative proceedings, education, and public hearings. Yet seven years later, 41 percent (7/17) of the deliverables in the NWT Indigenous Languages Action Plan to improve access to public services in all official languages remain incomplete

Committee recognizes that offering frontline services in Indigenous languages comes with significant challenges such as training staff, developing resources, and the availability of language speakers. Committee is concerned that:

1. There is insufficient funding and capacity for the GNWT to successfully champion improving the public's access to government programs and services in all official languages; and,
2. The Premier did not identify a Minister responsible for Official Languages, and yet the Official Languages Act requires a Minister be held

responsible. By default, the responsibility for official languages seems to have fallen on the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. However, the ECE Minister does not have the authority to direct other departments on the use of official languages in their program delivery, nor do they possess the authority to hold other departments accountable for poor performance.

Therefore:

Recommendation 4: The Standing Committee on Government Operations recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories implement the funding and resources necessary to ensure speakers of the NWT's official Indigenous languages have access to government services in their language.

Recommendation 5: The Standing Committee on Government Operations recommends that the Premier of the Northwest Territories clarify the roles and responsibilities held by the various departments and Ministers regarding official languages to ensure that all eleven of the Northwest Territories languages are treated equitably.

Languages Commissioner

The Official Languages Act was amended in 1990 to create the position of Languages Commissioner to act as a linguistic ombud for people who have complaints that their linguistic rights are not being upheld – the first ombud-like position in the NWT. Interestingly, the first Annual Report of the Languages Commissioner for the Year 1992-1993 states that: The Official Languages Act simply provides a framework for choice – those people who cannot communicate in English, or who prefer to communicate in a language other than English, now have certain guarantees from their government that they can communicate in their own language. It is about respect for minorities, about breaking down systemic barriers that have existed for years, and about fairness. It is about equal opportunity for linguistic minorities to participate in the affairs of government. Thirty-two years later, the Languages Commissioner is still advocating for fundamental improvements in language provision in government services while the GNWT has not yet to make meaningful advancements in providing government services in Indigenous languages.

Ms. Brenda Gauthier, the 8th Languages Commissioner, stated that she will leave the office at the end of her four-year term in January 2025. She is concerned that the scope

of the Languages Commissioner, as laid out in the Act, is too narrow compared to other statutory officers of the Legislative Assembly.

In addition to investigating complaints received and promoting public education, most statutory officers provide an assessment of the effectiveness of their respective legislation. Within the Official Languages Act, that responsibility falls on the official language boards with recommendations made to the Minister, not the Legislative Assembly. As such:

Recommendation 6: The Standing Committee on Government Operations recommends that the Legislative Assembly review the duties and mandate of the Languages Commissioner before the recruitment and appointment of a new Commissioner to ensure that the next Commissioner has the resources to successfully act as the guardian of languages rights in the NWT.

Conclusion

This concludes the Standing Committee on Government Operations Report on the Review of the 2023-2024 Annual Report of the Languages Commissioner of the Northwest Territories. Committee eagerly awaits the government's response to committee's recommendations in Committee Report 4-20(1), Report on the Review of the 2022-2023 Annual Report of the Languages Commissioner, and respectfully recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories provide a response to the recommendations contained within this report within 120 days.

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Great Slave, that Committee Report 13-20(1), Standing Committee on Government Operations Report on the Review of the 2023-2024 Annual Report of the Northwest Territories Official Languages Commissioner, be received and adopted by this Assembly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Frame Lake. The motion's in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. All those in favour? Opposed? Abstentions? The motion is carried.

---Carried

Member from Frame Lake.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for

Great Slave, that pursuant to Rule 9.4(5)(a) that the Government of the Northwest Territories table a comprehensive response to this report, including all recommendations, within 120 days or at the earliest opportunity subsequent to the passage of 120 days.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Frame Lake. The motion's in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. All those in favour? Opposed? Abstentions? The motion has carried.

---Carried

Member from Frame Lake.

COMMITTEE REPORT 14-20(1):
REPORT ON THE REVIEW OF THE 2023-
2024 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES OFFICE OF
THE OMBUD, DEEMED READ, RECEIVED,
AND ADOPTED. RESPONSE FROM
GOVERNMENT REQUESTED,
CARRIED

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, your Standing Committee on Government Operations is pleased to report its Report on the Review of the 2023-2024 Annual Report of the Northwest Territories Ombud.

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Great Slave, that Committee Report 14-20(1), Standing Committee on Government Operations Report on the Review of the 2023-2024 Annual Report of the Northwest Territories ombud, be deemed read and printed in Hansard in its entirety. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Frame Lake. The motion's in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. All those in favour? Opposed? Abstentions? Motion has carried.

---Carried

MR. MORSE: Standing committee on Government operations report on the review of the 2023-2024 annual report of the northwest territories ombud

Introduction

The Standing Committee on Government Operations (Committee) has reviewed Speaking up for Fairness: 2023-2024 Annual Report of the Northwest Territories Ombud (Annual Report).¹ The Committee thanks Ms. Krista Carnogursky, recently appointed Ombud, for her appearance before Committee on August 26, 2024.²

Section 33 of the Ombud Act requires the Ombud to prepare an annual report.³ The 2023-2024 report highlights the Ombud's focus on investigating inquiries and complaints, public education and outreach, and continuing advocacy to update the Ombud Act.

About the NWT Ombud

The NWT Ombud promotes administrative fairness in territorial government administration and services. The powers and duties of the Ombud include:

- Investigating complaints from people who feel territorial authorities have treated them unfairly.
- Own initiative investigations to help improve government services.
- Public education on the principles of administrative fairness.

Observations

Committee wishes to express our gratitude to the previous Ombud, Ms. Colette Langlois, for her tireless work to bring the Office of the Ombud to life over the last five years. From the enactment of the Ombud Act in 2018, Ms. Langlois and her team advocated for fairer policies, practices, and communications, helped make services fairer and more person-centred, and participated in numerous outreach and education opportunities to inform the public of the Ombud's Office.

Staffing

In the 2022-2023 annual report and public hearing, the Ombud expressed concerns that the Office lacks the capacity and resources to carry out its full mandate. The 2023-2024 Annual Report and public briefing highlight this worry again, with a 45% increase in inquiries to the Office and increased demand for new training and presentations.

As the Ombud's Office continues to build trust in communities through outreach, it will need to meet the increased demand for its services. Committee wishes to reiterate a recommendation from the CR 6-20(1) Report on the Review of the 2022-2023 Annual Report

of the Northwest Territories Ombud and Special Report on Recommendations for Amendments to the Ombud Act:

Recommendation 1: The Standing Committee on Government Operations recommends that the Legislative Assembly, in consultation with the Ombud, identify and address any shortfalls in budget or resources that may inhibit the Ombud's Office from fulfilling its mandate.

Conclusion

This concludes the Standing Committee on Government Operations Report on the Review of the 2023-2024 Annual Report of the Northwest Territories Ombud Commission.

Committee eagerly awaits the government's response to Committee's recommendations in CR 6-20(1) Report on the Review of the 2022-2023 Annual Report of the Northwest Territories Ombud and Special Report on Recommendations for Amendments to the Ombud Act.4 As the recommendation identified above was included in Committee's report on the 2022-2023 Annual Report, Committee will review that response and follow up directly as necessary.

MR. SPEAKER: Member from Frame Lake.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Great Slave, that Committee Report 14-20(1), Standing Committee on Government Operations Report on the Review of the 2023-2024 Annual Report of the Northwest Territories Ombud, be received and adopted by the Assembly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Frame Lake. The motion's in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. All those in favour? Opposed? Abstentions? Motion has been carried.

---Carried

Member from Frame Lake.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Great Slave, that pursuant to Rule 9.4(5)(a) that the Government of the Northwest Territories table a comprehensive response to this report, including all recommendations, within 120 days or at the earliest opportunity subsequent to the passage of 120 days. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Frame Lake. Motion's in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. All those in favour? Opposed? Abstentions? Motion has carried.

---Carried

Reports of Standing and Special Committees. Returns to oral questions. Acknowledgements.

Colleagues, I'm going to call a ten-minute break to give our translators a bit of a break, and we will come back as soon as we can. Thank you very much.

---SHORT RECESS

MR. SPEAKER: Colleagues, oral questions. Member from Great Slave.

Oral Questions

QUESTION 335-20(1): SAFER COMMUNITIES AND NEIGHBOURHOODS LEGISLATION

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions today are for the Minister of Justice. The 15th Assembly ultimately killed the previous attempt at SCAN legislation in 2007. So my question is has the department revisited this legislative concept between that time in 2007 and now prior to the 20th Assembly, or are we just starting from square one? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Great Slave. Minister of Justice.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I believe it was 2007 is when this was first brought forward, and in the interim period the department hasn't done a lot of work looking at SCAN. A lot of work was done back then and so there's a bit of a base that we can start from but as with anything, a lot changes in 16, 17, 18 years. So there's still a lot of work to be done but it will be informed by other pieces of legislation from around the country that have been operating for an additional, you know, 15, 16 years since then as well as court challenges that have been brought against those pieces of legislation. So we're not starting from scratch, but there's a significant amount of work to do and consultation to do as well. Thank you.

MS. REID: Yeah, thank you for that, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Minister. Sounds like there's some interjurisdictional scan -- no pun intended -- being done there. Can the Minister be specific about what preliminary work his legal staff is conducting with regards to SCAN legislation so that it will, in effect, be a

scalpel instead of an unconstitutional hammer? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And as the Member alluded to, there is cross-jurisdictional scans that will be required. There's examination of the Charter challenges that have been brought forward. There's going to have to be discussions, obviously engagement, throughout the territory on this, engagement with other jurisdictions who have had the legislation. So there's a lot of work, and I don't plan on making this an unconstitutional hammer. There was a challenge in the Yukon recently. There was a decision rendered that one minor section -- or one section -- I won't say minor, of that SCAN Act was unconstitutional. From what I understand, it was a rarely used section of that act, and there is not -- there's not an appeal that's being pursued by the Yukon government so that's essentially a settled matter. And we're going to learn from that and ensure that the legislation that we do enact is tailored to the territory, is fair to residents, and achieves its goals in a constitutional way. Thank you.

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So I'm hearing that the Minister of Justice is wanting to tailor it to the territories, so I'm just going to build a little on that.

We've heard many times in this House from smaller community MLAs that folks in smaller communities have resorted to vigilantism to scare out dealers. So what kinds of considerations is the Minister instructing his staff to make this legislation do to make sure that it works well for both the needs of the capital and the needs of our smaller communities? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, we're a little early in the process to start giving direction on how to proceed. I want to see those jurisdictional scans, I want to see the research that is done, and then we can figure out how to move forward. But to the Member's point, I do want to ensure that this -- there's differences between a small community perhaps with no RCMP and somewhere like Yellowknife. And so it's going to -- you know, it won't be easy to find that balance, but I'm confident that we can do that. So the Member can rest assured that we will be taking into consideration the needs of the different sizes and types of communities in the Northwest Territories. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Minister of Justice. Final supplementary. Member from Great Slave.

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Minister for that. In my brief reviewing

of this issue, I'm curious about some other tools. Will the Minister also consider looking at community safety orders or amendments to the Residential Tenancies Act that will provide fair and thorough processes that would lead to the eviction of suspected drug dealers. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And yes, the Residential Tenancies Act, it will be reviewed by this upcoming summer. That is stipulated. And we'll see what we can do in there. I want to look at every avenue that we have to ensure that we're protecting communities, not supporting drug dealers and drug houses, and finding every way to give communities and the RCMP the tools they need to protect communities. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Minister of Justice. Oral questions. Member from Yellowknife Centre.

QUESTION 336-20(1):
CHILD AND YOUTH SAFETY CONCERNS

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions will be to the Minister of health. I highlighted an email the CEO of NTHSSA has received, amongst many other GNWT employees, regarding concern brought forward of what someone perceives as human rights issues, abuse, and neglect on youth at a particular facility.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to hear about by what way of process is going on at this current time to investigate or get to the bottom of these particular issues to ensure that there's a fulsome investigation and assessment of these concerns highlighted? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Yellowknife Centre. Minister of Health and Social Services.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as the Member is referring to a current investigation, I cannot, you know, discuss any investigations publicly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. HAWKINS: Mr. Speaker, in the Child and Family Services Act, it relatively seems silent on the area of when it's duty to report to the RCMP. There's been serious concerns brought up with respect to human rights, abuse, and neglect of youth. What threshold does it take to engage the RCMP on these particular matters of urgency? Thank you.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Member from Yellowknife Centre. Minister of Health and Social Services.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, within investigations when child and family services is involved, if there are any legal implications within the investigation then they will, you know, report to RCMP or to whomever that needs to happen. And sometimes RCMP are part of investigations. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. HAWKINS: The Minister brought it up, so I'm going to ask, have the RCMP been engaged early to ensure that there's been a fulsome study of this particular issue so there's been -- there will be no delay, if any? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Member from Yellowknife Centre, I think the Minister has made it very clear there's a criminal investigation going on and she can't talk specifically about this investigation. So if you could reword the question so it doesn't involve the investigation, if it's process and policies, that would be greatly appreciated. Thank you.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, or I should say Mr. Speaker Whitford on the side, the way to massage, give the Member another chance.

Mr. Speaker, the issue here is that I want to make sure that -- is there any -- are there any barriers, policy barriers, Mr. Speaker, stopping the department from engaging the RCMP to join any potential investigation that she foresees? Thank you.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I said previously, any investigation that child and family services does, if there is found that there may be criminal findings during their investigation, they will report to the appropriate -- and if it's -- it would be RCMP in that case. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Health and Social Services. Final supplementary. Member from Yellowknife Centre.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister said if they find something. So in other words, what skills does this investigator bring to the table that they can properly assess if a crime has been done? So in other words, I'm asking, Mr. Speaker, what qualifications does this investigator carry to ensure that they are able to absolutely with great certainty make a decision one way or the other? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Yellowknife Centre. Are you talking hypothetical? I'm trying to -- like, if you're asking about the situation then it cannot be asked, so.

MR. HAWKINS: No, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister said there was an investigation, if I heard on there, because she can't comment, so I'm asking what skills do they bring to this -- the person doing the process. So do they have the skills -- sorry? So I'm asking about their qualifications to be able to identify the issues as pointed out that could be referred to the RCMP.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the team consists -- when investigations happen, they are done by social workers. Social workers' experience -- are experienced in conducting investigations of this nature and once the investigation steps are completed, you know, they will do the process that they have to do. If there's a criminal process that they have to report, they have a duty to report then they will do that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Health and Social Services. Oral questions. Member from Range Lake.

QUESTION 337-20(1):
PARAMEDICINE IN RURAL AND REMOTE
COMMUNITIES

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, advanced care paramedics are equipped with knowledge and skills required to provide advanced patient care in critical or complex medical situations, such as life -- advanced life support procedures, medical administration, obstetric care, advanced airway management, mental health crises, crisis intervention, and much more. If we had these resources available in -- especially outside of regional centres, they could be providing the life-saving services where there are none.

Is the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs willing to work to bring advanced care paramedic training into rural and remote communities to assist with ground ambulance services in the Northwest Territories? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Range Lake. Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs.

HON. VINCE McKAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What the Member is speaking of is an advanced care paramedic and, you know, that type of service for a small community, it may be ideal in some aspects but in the aspect of my department and what the Member is speaking of, you're talking of a service that's done by a community like an ambulance service or a fire department. And sometimes in small

communities like that when you have an advanced care paramedic, they have to maintain the scope of practice and in order to maintain that scope of practice, they also have to do so many types of skills to maintain that which is very hard to do in a small community sometimes. So ideally, it's up to the community whether or not they want to bring in those services. They have the funding available. And I know for myself it's been an issue in the past, something I'm still working on with the department of health and continue to work on, on the services that we can provide to the communities and what types of services are needed for the communities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the same vein, community paramedicine is an emerging initiative that's proven to be successful to provide safe, timely, mobile medical care in the community setting, such as palliative care, pharmacology, dementia, delirium, and depression services, transfusions medicine, and all manner of things. This helps keep people out of the health care system and gets to problems before they get worse. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. Can the Minister work to deliver on this initiative with local emergency services providers to advance community paramedicine in regional centres and in the capital? Thank you.

HON. VINCE MCKAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What the Member is speaking of entails a lot of work when it comes down to legislation in regards to the scope of practice or what paramedics can do in the field. And this is something that we currently don't have which would take a long -- a lot of work to do and to get going. My focus, and I think the continued focus, is going to be to continue to support a basic response within communities so that first responder trainer, first responder response to communities are there in the communities and support the communities in order to assist in community emergencies. So when it comes down to the term "paramedics", there's different levels of paramedics, and at this time there is no vision of having paramedics within the communities supported by the government. Thank you.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, I'm trying to see if the Minister will develop a path for this. We could have training programs at Aurora College if they're funded, for example, to offer paramedicine courses. To enhance our ability to do this, we could work with the licensing bodies in different jurisdictions. Alberta comes to mind, to provide certifications, scope of practice, and all the things the Minister talked about. So is the Minister willing to take this on and expand the degrees of

paramedicine in the Northwest Territories so we could reap the benefits that are sorely needed for an overburdened health system and communities that are sometimes completely removed from emergency services and emergency medicine? Thank you.

HON. VINCE MCKAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think if I had \$25 million, I could solve this problem right now. But this is something that's obviously going to take a lot more than that. You know, licensing paramedics, licensing first responders in the Northwest Territories, is something that's been looked at and it's been reviewed a few times; it's been studied. The problem is when you're dealing with that, you're also forcing volunteers to be licensed which also, again, puts restrictions on volunteers, whether or not they want to volunteer. But it also then turns around to say we're going to charge ourselves essentially to license paramedics. So, you know, this is an added cost, this is an added expense where I don't think it really needs to be. Having worked in the field, I think there's ways about this that could help communities advance. Considering there's only one real -- excuse me, sorry, two full-time services outside of Yellowknife, full-time services outside of Yellowknife, having a licensing is not going to be effective for the rest of the communities. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs. Final supplementary. Member from Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to the Minister for clarifying that but I'm not asking for a licensing body. I think that is the too larger project. I'm asking if the Minister will explore partnerships with other provinces to bring their licensing bodies to the Northwest Territories to provide this to paramedicine. And I'll point out as well that we have contractors that provide this kind of services in the Northwest Territories. Maybe if we had more flexibility or more range of options, we would see more of those operators open up North and expand the range of services. So will the Minister at least look into working with other jurisdictions to bring licensing bodies into the Northwest Territories so we can expand the scope of paramedicine? Thank you.

HON. VINCE MCKAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The way it currently works right now with no licensing body, a lot of the paramedics, whether it be a primary care paramedic, advanced care paramedic, or critical care paramedic, if they are licensed outside a province and, say for an example they're licensed in Alberta, when they come work in the Northwest Territories, they work within their scope of practice which most times most

companies that hire them allow them to do based on their protocols that they have. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs. Oral questions. Member from Inuvik Boot Lake.

QUESTION 338-20(1):
INUVIK LONG-TERM CARE PROJECT

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, back in 2018, the Minister and the government of the day had announced a 48-bed long-term care facility to be established in Inuvik. I know we've had this conversation in the House a couple of times, and I'd like to request the Minister of health to provide an update on where that project stands. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Inuvik Boot Lake. Minister of Health and Social Services.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the project approved for planning only in 2024-2025. The geotechnical analysis has been completed. The functional programming, including operational planning, is underway. And an RFP for schematic design and class C cost estimates will be posted this winter. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, back around that same time I know there was an operational plan provided as well as a schematic design that was provided by both partnership between both Indigenous governments in the community. Is that something that the department is still considering looking at or are they going for a fresh set of eyes on this? Thank you.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, and I do recall the plan that was presented -- I think it was even presented to the community. At the time, the numbers of the day, the beds that were needed for long-term care placement in the Northwest Territories were very high, and then they relooked at it because of the cry for many residents outside in the small communities wanting care closer to home, and it made a priority of the last two governments is to being able to, you know, age in place gracefully. And I mean, that was a priority of the 19th Assembly. And so there was much more work done on how do we support seniors on different levels of care to remain in their communities longer with their communities, with their culture, and less likely to have to be moved to a regional centre. So with that, then there was a new focus on revisiting the bed numbers and then when that

happened, it came down to Inuvik's bed reduction to 20 beds that are needed currently in the Beaufort Delta region -- or for Inuvik. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And, yes, I thank the Minister for that clarification, and I had understood that was kind of a priority of the 19th Assembly. I'm glad to hear it's still at least 20 beds, not the 48 that we had originally wanted, but certainly I'm glad to hear that it's progressing.

Is there still an appetite, then, Mr. Speaker, for this government to consider working with the Indigenous governments on either through procurement, either having them design and build this facility and lease it back to the government or at least -- I guess least of all build this facility through the Indigenous governments? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, at this time, no, because -- I think the Member will speak to and has spoke to a lot of the work that was done in the previous governments that had a collaborated approach to doing this. As of now, we do not have that and so because -- and then the delay of the project and the change in the project, I think right now where we're at is just going for the schematic design and it's going to be put out to -- like I said, it's going to be put out for RFP publicly to be posted winter of 2025. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Health and Social Services. Final supplementary. Member from Inuvik Boot Lake.

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So if I understand that, the RFP will be going out in 2025, and can then the Minister provide an update on when she expects this facility to be completed and operational? Thank you.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't have a timeline as to when this will be completed or operational. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Health and Social Services. Member from the Sahtu.

QUESTION 339-20(1):
REGIONAL ENERGY RESOURCE TABLES

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Further to my questions there -- or my statement earlier, my first question to the Minister of Infrastructure is will the Minister share what has and is being done since the federal government has created the regional energy resource tables? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from the Sahtu. Minister of Infrastructure.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this was an initiative of the federal government meant to provide a vehicle by which provinces and territories could explain our priorities for the federal government and hopefully to be a pathway to unlocking federal investment. It was a bit slow getting off the ground. There was back and forth about how to get organized and who should be on the tables. But I am pleased to say that the GNWT was part of the second round of these tables that were launched originally and that they have been fairly active now since the spring of 2024 in order to scope out what areas of priority we have here in the Northwest Territories and be able to share them actively with the federal government. Thank you.

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks for that information there from the Minister there. My next question is what good has come from these tables for the NWT? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I said they certainly have been a little slower to get moving than what I might have hoped. That said, I've certainly spoken to my department about them to get updates, and I'm assured that one of the biggest things that's happening is these have been an opportunity and a vehicle by which our officials are actually able to engage with the appropriate counterparts in a context of identifying priorities in this space, identifying areas where a federal investment can unlock some of our priorities rather than being only a one size all -- fits all approach coming from Ottawa. So, for example, with the Critical Minerals Investment Fund, these tables have been an opportunity to be able to say, look, where -- what kind of projects do we have, where do we need your investment, and been an opportunity to do that in a more effective way so that the money is flowing and being unlocked more quickly here in the Northwest Territories. Thank you.

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks for the information there from the Minister. My next question is with this package of information, and I really want to thank the Minister of ITI for issuing support to some of the developers, or potential developers in my region along with the other regions of the Northwest Territories. Has the department taken steps of consultation engagements with other NWT industry stakeholders, for example the Chamber of Mines, are they aware of the progress from the tables? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this is firstly a shared initiative between different departments and one where we've -- although Infrastructure has been the lead under the element of being an energy -- the energy lead, ECC and ITI are both also engaged from the GNWT's perspective. One of the critical steps that we had to undertake was to ensure that we were properly engaged in aligning with priorities from the Council of Leaders and meeting therefore with IGOs and, indeed, the next step, I'm told and, in fact, is to take the -- what we've got from this group now to industry, and I expect that that will include the Chamber of Mines. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Infrastructure. Final supplementary.

Oral questions. Member from Frame Lake.

QUESTION 340-20(1):
SUPPORTED LIVING REVIEW AND
RECOMMENDATIONS

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of health. Mr. Speaker, what progress has health and social services made to date in implementing the 12 accepted recommendations in the supported living report? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Frame Lake. Minister of Health and Social Services.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: The Department of Health and Social Services is making progress on the implementation of the recommendations that came from the supported living review. There's been a steering committee with representation from the department and all three health and social services authorities that was established in April of 2023 to oversee this work. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there's probably some more detail out there so if the Minister is interested in sharing that with Members, I'd appreciate it. But the department accepted recommendation 8, which was to increase caregiver supports and overnight respite options in principle only. Has the department made any progress on this recommendation or explored options related to expanding respite services? Thank you.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: thank you, Mr. Speaker. And, yes, to the Member, I do have a list, and I don't want to read out a whole page of things, so I will promise to give that list to the Member.

When it comes to overnight respite, the resources that would be required to provide overnight respite services will be explored; however -- as part of this work, but they will require new resources and dollars to do that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And as in my Member's statement, I noted that over time I think it'll help us save money so I encourage the Minister and appreciate that commitment to look into it.

Mr. Speaker, has the department made any progress on any of the other recommendations which were accepted in principle but not fully accepted at the time? Thank you.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as the department we have not been focusing on advancing these areas but, however, the work will be done in the future to determine what resources would be required to move them forward. And just so that the Member is aware, that the work that has been -- they've been doing is to be established and, like, they've updated the work plan that's been drafted and they've also begun to develop policies and processes. So there's things that have been going on behind the scenes to be able to roll out and work on those 12 recommendations that they have approved, and then once they have that then they can start to look at the remainder of the recommendations. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Health and Social Services. Final supplementary. Member from Frame Lake.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to the Minister for that response. Certainly, I wanted to highlight respite services as an item that should be a priority, and I appreciate the Member taking a specific look at that. Mr. Speaker, several of the accepted recommendations in the report that were accepted spoke to stronger -- the need for stronger interdepartmental coordination with Housing NWT and ECE. Has the department made any progress on advancing those recommendations specifically? Thank you.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the department has initiated these discussions with ECE and housing to explore the overlap policies for adults in supported living, and so that work will continue to evolve during this now that they have all of the people in the working groups established. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Health and Social Services. Oral questions. Member from Mackenzie Delta.

QUESTION 341-20(1):
SOCIAL PASSING IN SCHOOLS

MR. NERYSOO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Pertaining to my Member's statement, 20 or 30 years ago the education system looked at teaching our children with great pride. Today we don't see that pride within our schools. The school -- the education system is failing our students every day. When can we start taking pride in the education system again and start seeing positive results within our smaller communities? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Mackenzie Delta. Minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would say that that day is today, and I would say that that day was yesterday. I think that we have a tremendous amount of youth in the Northwest Territories who are working very hard in order to achieve their education. I had the honour and opportunity sitting with two pages in this House today, one of which is collecting water at the moment and keeping us well hydrated. His name is Mason, and I had the opportunity to sit down with him and listen to his concerns and questions about education in Colville Lake. So that was very much appreciated.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's worth saying, though, that I appreciate that the Member continues to raise education, especially in small communities in the Northwest Territories. And this is a concern that wasn't only shared by the Member. It's shared by myself. It's shared by my predecessor and was definitely shared by the Office of the Auditor General of the Government of Canada. And that is why they did a report, and I'd be more than happy to share the findings of that report with the Member and with this House. Thank you.

MR. NERYSOO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. How does the department of education evaluate the progress of students and determine if they're ready to advance to the next grade or even graduate from high school? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, each teacher has a curriculum with an evaluation process, and each student in the Northwest Territories has certain markers that they have to meet in order to graduate in the Northwest Territories, certain courses that they have to take. I do want to acknowledge the Member's concerns with education in the Northwest Territories and the action plan that stemmed from the concerns that were raised by the OAG in the previous

Assembly. Those concerns did stem from education outcomes in the Northwest Territories, and that action plan identified 30 action items and the Government of the Northwest Territories has completed 25 of them, many of which spoke to things like multi-aged classrooms in small communities as well as working with and affording additional training to principals in small communities. Thank you.

MR. NERYSOO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Back in about 20, 30 years ago, when a student needed help, there was a special needs class that they were placed in so that they can receive this help. I would like to know if the Minister would look at developing a program for the select few students. We have very limited students who are capable of going to post-secondary school but they're kept in classes where they're distracted and kept back. And I'm wondering if the department will look at developing a program for the select few students who are capable of going to post-secondary institutions and providing them with proper level of education without any distractions? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we have so many students that are capable of achieving education through post-secondary. We have so many students that have so much potential in the Northwest Territories, and I would want so many students to be able to achieve that potential and continue to work towards it. Part of that action plan that I spoke of did have some deliverables in it for things like training afforded -- additional training afforded to our classroom and education assistants. And that puts more people in the classroom able to work specifically with students that either are struggling or need additional supports and services. And that is something that we did, I've spoken in this House before, about the 24 graduates that we saw through our partnership with Douglas College. And ensuring that all students have access to not only post-secondary but access to knowing they can be incredibly important to me. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. Final supplementary. Member from Mackenzie Delta.

MR. NERYSOO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A few months ago, the Minister was able to come to the Mackenzie Delta to do a Minister's tour but when we arrived in McPherson, there was a death in the community, so we didn't actually do very much within the community. I was wondering if the Minister would commit to a tour of the Mackenzie Delta while schools are in session and see how the students interact

together and students and teachers interact within the classroom setting? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the hospitality of the Member and his community leadership was bar none. Having the opportunity to return to the Mackenzie Delta would give me great pride and great pleasure, and I would love the opportunity to have that conversation with the Member to see when our schedules might match up. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. Oral questions. Member from Yellowknife North.

QUESTION 342-20(1): PRIMARY CARE REFORM

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister of Health and Social Services. The first question is, does the Minister acknowledge that the way the primary care reform has been carried out has led to negative impacts, both on continuity of care for patients and negative impacts on practitioners' efficiency, morale, and ability to see patients? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Yellowknife North. Minister of Health and Social Services.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, with no added resources in primary care, the delivery model has been reorganized with the intent to deliver a more equitable access to service aligning the restructuring with the transition to Liwego'ati proved to be relatively a seamless process. The ten teams involved in the relocation would primarily be absorbed to fulfill the additional staffing requirements resulting in the potential dissolution of several teams. Blaming the way the reform and operation changes that are happening for all the negativity and reduced efficiency overlooks the historical context and the challenges of moving services into the new building while staffing the downtown clinic without adding any new services. Throughout this process, all team members were kept informed, engaged, throughout numerous meetings, discussions, as much as leadership could manage that. And so therefore, you know, I understand with any change, comes -- you know, there might be -- there may be questions and there may be things that people don't agree with and don't like, but this is a new change. They only moved into the -- just recently moved into the Liwego'ati and they are just recently starting the four teams. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Is the Minister monitoring the rate of physicians, nurses, MPs, LPNs who have been terminating their contracts with the health authority over the past year, and is she taking steps to find out why they are leaving? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yes, the Department of Health and Social Services, the Hay River Health and Social Services, the NTHSSA, and the TCSA, all complete quarterly vacancy reviews to identify current and future active vacancy needs in the budgeted positions.

Mr. Speaker, along with the vacancy review, exit interviews continue to be conducted with staff across the health and social services system. Data metrics and trends based on their feedback have been used to synthesize into six overarching themes and drivers. The results have been used to inform the creation of the employee engagement strategy and development of the employee retention programs and initiatives. And as of June 30th, 2024, the vacancy rate for physicians within the NTHSSA was 48.6 compared to March 31st which was 48.7. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My next question is just can the Minister commit to providing data to this House on the rate of health care practitioners, so that's physicians, nurses, NPs, and LPNs, and other staff, who have been terminating their contracts with the NTHSSA over the past year? And I would emphasize that I'd like to see the stats for primary care in particular but then extending to other units. Can the Minister commit to providing this data in written form? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure of how detailed, like, the vacancy -- the vacancy information that we have, but I can commit to providing the most recent vacancy information that we have. But I'd like to say, however, Mr. Speaker, that in doing exit interviews, you know, staff are choosing to leave due to many different issues in primary care. Many are departing for sick family members that live outside the NWT that they've disclosed or reasons related to family and child care. Mr. Speaker, there have been two NPs that have left primary care since the move -- or there have been no NPs that have left. We actually hired two NPs in the prime care since the move. But the largest group that we're seeing that move around in the health care are the program assistants, and they are entry level positions in that team, and they have more options to move around in the system and take different roles as they see they arise. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Health and Social Services. Final supplementary. Member from Yellowknife North.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The final question is are steps being taken to reduce the administrative burden on practitioners, such as physicians, which the burden has unfortunately increased due to the primary care reforms, so that they can work to their full scope and do what they do best which is caring for patients? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, a lot of effort has been put into improving efficiency, and everyone is part of this work. Physicians are on the new YK primary care reform regional committee which is guiding the reform efforts. This committee has created two working groups, both including physicians. One group is focused on clinical information management, and this -- and is working to reduce administrative burdens and streamlining process allowing practitioners and nurses to spend more time with patients. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Health and Social Services. Oral questions. Member from Monfwi.

QUESTION 343-20(1):
IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE ON
WINTER AND ICE ROADS

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Infrastructure. Mr. Speaker, residents are concerned about ice roads given changing climate. How is the Department of Infrastructure currently mitigating the impacts of climate change on our winter and ice roads? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Monfwi. Minister of Infrastructure.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the last several seasons of the ice road certainly have been very challenging. They're starting later, and the roads are deteriorating sooner. As a result, the department has taken a number of measures. For one, and in fact I believe the Monfwi riding is one where they are leading in terms of having studies and better studies done of the permafrost of exactly what's going on to understand what's going on with our roadway systems. We are trying to get out and get the roads in earlier. They are able to try to build up faster so that they can move more equipment, more fuel, more things on a shorter season. And, Mr. Speaker, I can say that, particularly in light of what's happening in the Sahtu right now,

we're also -- wanted to make sure we are doing everything we can to maximize the efficiency of the drivers and the trucks, so wanting to improve our working relationship in the private sector, reaching out to the mines -- we've obviously been doing this for many years -- all in an effort to make sure that we maximize the road time that we do have to get resupply in. Thank you.

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for the information. So what is the average cost of building and maintaining the winter road to Gameti from January through March annually? Thank you.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I don't know the per kilometer cost of the winter road offhand. I certainly can get that. There's different costs for some of the different roads as well, so I'll make sure that I'm getting the one for that stretch, and I'll commit to get that back to the Member here quickly. Thank you.

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you. What planning has occurred to begin to develop an all-season road to the community of Gameti by the Department of Infrastructure?

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, an all-season road to Gameti is not currently in the Infrastructure acquisition plan for the immediate future for the Government of the Northwest Territories. I'm certainly alive to the concerns the Member is raising and, again, you know, we're seeing what kinds of challenges we have but at this point, Gameti is not in line for an all-season road. They are still relying on the winter roads system and air freight as a backup. We are right now working with the Tlicho in terms of trying to make sure that that winter road gets put in, and the costs of that are, indeed, quite significant. So for now, we're just going to try and make sure the systems that we do have in place are actually working to the best of the abilities that we have. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Infrastructure. Final supplementary. Member from Monfwi.

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With that in mind, what she just said, can the Minister commit to a feasibility study or cost benefit analysis for an all-weather road -- access road to Gameti? Thank you.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, I'm not going to make that commitment here today. Again, I'm live to the challenges of transportation infrastructure in the North and the fact that we are challenged with our transportation infrastructure in the North, but

doing a feasibility study at this point, given the challenges that we're having and given that we're right now trying to get the Mackenzie Valley Highway done, it may well be that we're in a situation where we want to get one thing done and then we can move on to looking at the next. But at this point, that's not a project that is on the near horizon. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Infrastructure. Oral questions. Member from the Deh Cho.

QUESTION 344-20(1):
DEH CHO BRIDGE

MRS. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And further to my Member's statement, I have questions for the Minister of Infrastructure. On the Deh Cho Bridge, what caused the damage to the Deh Cho Bridge? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from the Deh Cho. Minister of Infrastructure.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So, Mr. Speaker, back in August of 2023, it was noticed that there appeared to be a broken cable on this particular bridge. They had engineers on site within 48 hours, and they were able to identify fairly early on what they thought was happening was in fact a metallurgical problem, a problem with the materials themselves. So a number of -- they took the materials out. They pulled the cable off the bridge, took it for testing, wanted to of course to make sure that they knew for sure what had gone wrong, and it was confirmed that there was no defect in the design or the engineering or the construction; there was something wrong in the metal that was actually used to cast this particular piece. And so as a result of that, not only did they fix that one, Mr. Speaker, but they fixed all 24 bars just to be sure since they were all cast from the same bit of metal. Thank you.

MRS. YAKELEYA: Thank you, thank you for that. Yes, there was different -- people were saying maybe a truck hit it or something but I didn't realize this happened. So why is the repair to the bridge taking so long at this point? Thank you.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to speak to this question. I think there has been a lot of concern and rumor and frustration on this but in fact, as I said, it's -- we're really only just barely over a year since the issue was identified, and what they've done is gone back to the original constructor of the bridge. Rather than try to find someone new to fit themselves in, they've gone back to them to recast these pieces again. They

had to, in fact -- well, to recast the entire 24 bars. So that's now been done. It's been happening by this other company. At the same time, Infrastructure did go out, we simultaneously procured the part of getting it built back in. And so with that, they've actually -- by doing it that way, they're able to speed up the overall process of getting folks on site. There was a bit of a delay in terms of getting the material -- or the bridge components shipped here. I am told that they are due here -- they're en route, they're due here in early November. And the best I can say is in terms of a delay, I think early on, Mr. Speaker, people were saying an estimate of having it rebuilt this fall. Fall, of course, can be September. But, really, there's only been a slight delay in that delivery, and so I'm happy to say that they're en route, they're expected to be here in November. Thank you.

MRS. YAKELEYA: Thank you for that. Thank you. So the cable -- the cable will be repaired in November. When will the bridge be fully functional? Thank you.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I was just looking for an exact date in any of my materials, but I can say that if it's here at the beginning of November and, as I said, we're looking to mobilize the construction at the same time, folks should be able to be using it this calendar year. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Infrastructure. Final supplementary. Member from Deh Cho.

MRS. YAKELEYA: Thank you. Well, okay, so might have to wait until next year though. Maybe, hopefully not. What is the total cost of the repairs to the Deh Cho Bridge; what is the total cost expected to be? Thank you.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I expect that the total cost of this will come in and around \$7 million. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Infrastructure. Oral questions. Member from Yellowknife Centre.

QUESTION 345-20(1):

CHILD AND YOUTH SAFETY CONCERNS

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there's one further area I wish to raise with respect to my earlier statement and my questions, and it's built around transparency. And first, I want to highlight and acknowledge the effort to put something in writing by a concerned citizen. It is a difficult undertaking

putting your name on something, forwarding information that you believe to be honest and true, and I want to acknowledge that. But at the same token, as well this matter's being discussed in the fray of public behind the scenes and those people who will be questioned is this true or untrue when the facts eventually emerge one way or the other, what type of transparency is going to be given once some type of determination of result after the investigation is done to ensure that all those who are talking behind the scenes or in front of the scenes or during the scenes, or whatever the case may be, are treated fairly and respectfully? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member. Minister of Health and Social Services.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Mr. Speaker, you know, if this is a CFS -- if there are any CFS investigations, those are children that we are talking about. Those are highly confidential, sensitive investigations. If there are criminal -- you know, things that go forward, then they go to the RCMP and criminal charges would be filed, and those would be in the courts. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So, Mr. Speaker, when people in the public are talking about this particular matter and when it's been investigated but there's no result in one way or the other whether the matter has been assessed and found not wanting or the matter has been assessed and found wanting and further steps, there's no public airing or clarification on this particular issue. So to be clear, Mr. Speaker -- and the last point I want to hone in on -- no one wants any names issued in this particular case, so that's not what I'm after. I'm saying how do we clear the air by ending the conversation by saying it's been investigated and it's been found not wanting or wanting and further steps will be -- as required will proceed. So how do we clear the air? Thank you.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we do not air or disclose private matters. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. HAWKINS: Mr. Speaker, when you're a funding agent and you're doing an investigation under the public guise of the public service in the process of -- you know, that falls into the child and family services area, don't you think there's some level of responsibility for clearing the air at the end of an investigation? Would the Minister comment on that? Thank you.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, even as the Minister, if there is an investigation going on I get notified

that the matter is concluded. And so if that's what the Member is wanting to know, if the matter is concluded, when it's concluded, that will be as much information that would be available to share. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Minister of Health and Social Services. Final supplementary. Yellowknife Centre.

MR. HAWKINS: No, that's fine. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Oral questions. Member from Range Lake.

QUESTION 346-20(1):
RESTORING BALANCE FINANCIAL
SUSTAINABILITY PLAN

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask about the restoring balance financial sustainability plan. So to the Minister of Finance, could she tell us if we will be on track as a government to save \$150 million by March 31st, 2028? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Range Lake. Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there's still a lot more work to do if we're going to hit that \$150 million mark, and much of that will depend on what happens in this House when we are discussing budgets, capital and main estimates, and determining what we put in them and what we might need to take out of them. Thank you.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the strategy calls for forced growth and new initiatives to be held to \$10 million per budget -- per annual budget. Can the Minister tell us how she did in regards to holding it to \$10 million the last budget, the last O and M budget? Thank you.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the main estimates are due out -- well, we've already gone through one round of them and the next ones aren't due out until, of course, the February sitting. It's not usually my practice or any other finance Minister's practice to discuss them in great detail before that happens. So our own processes this year are still underway in terms of building our budget, and so that directive remains in place. Thank you.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let me rephrase. In the main estimates, the last main estimates, were forced growth and new initiatives held to \$10 million? Thank you.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, thank you for the question. With respect to the last budget, there is more items in that budget than just the \$10 million, but it's not necessarily because of a forced growth or new initiatives. Things do come up through the course of a year. There can be a number of different reasons why things would come up or that things might be approved and that they might even out. So every department is responsible for bringing forward their budget, for managing their budget, and bringing that to the financial management board. The financial management board then uses the information that's in front of them, does an analysis, has a discussion, and decides whether or not something is approved. These guidelines that we put in place and the fiscal strategy we put in place, including the supplementary reserve that is likely to come up at some point in this Assembly -- or in this session, these are guidelines, they're directives from the Department of Finance, and we do try to make sure that that provides guidance to departments when they're developing their budgets so that we can all achieve the goal of this government which was restoring balance. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Finance. Final supplementary. Member from Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm starting to see why the largest ever surplus has disappeared. Why are we not following guide -- or we only have guidelines but not controls. So how is the Minister going to ensure these guidelines are met? Thank you.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am not the finance Minister for the federal government where the budget comes from. In consensus government and in this government, the Department of Finance provides policy directives. We try to do the monitoring of our financial situation, and we support departments when they bring forward their initiatives. We provide analysis of initiatives through our management board secretariat, who is an agency that benefits all of the financial management board. But when there are items that come from a department, they come forward to the financial management board, an analysis is done, and a decision is made. So it is a responsibility of all members of the government, every department of the government, to, in fact, achieve the goals of the fiscal strategy or to try to achieve the goals of the fiscal strategy and to try to be aligned by it. So, Mr. Speaker, that's where this sits. It is a difficult thing when you are facing wildfires, floods, more wildfires, low water, to simply say that we're going to stick to \$150 million reduction. It's a lot more complicated than that.

That said, it was known that we'd have some challenges and so that large surplus that we work towards ensured that we had the capacity to meet those challenges. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Finance. Oral questions. Member from Yellowknife North.

QUESTION 347-20(1):
PHYSICIAN WORKFORCE PLAN

MS. MORGAN: Okay, just under the wire. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a second set of questions for the Minister of Health and Social Services.

So in 2020, the department completed a physician workforce plan to lay out how many doctors and what kinds of doctors the territory actually needs. In their March 2024 letter, which was tabled in this House, the NWT Medical Association recommended that this plan be reviewed, analyzed, updated, and implemented, so that funding could be matched to strategic and evidence-based decisions.

So, first, can the Minister confirm whether this physician workforce plan was ever implemented in terms of establishing the right kinds and number of physician positions to match the plan? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Yellowknife North. Minister of Health and Social Services.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I will have to get back to the Member for that. Thank you.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The second question is is the department, or perhaps the new health care sustainability unit, working on a new workforce plan, including all health care practitioners, so we can establish the right number of positions that we need to have a sustainable health care system? Thank you.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the health sustainability unit falls under the executive office under the Premier. What I can say is there is work being done within that unit to be able to look at what the core services are that we are funded for and are we adequately funded for those services through all the funding that we get. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And on that note, I have been told by some physicians in my riding that our primary care system is only funded to serve a population of about 15,000 people. Can the Minister confirm

whether or not we have the right amount of funding in place for primary care to be able to serve the entire NWT population? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as anyone in this House knows, the trend over the last 20 years of the NT -- like, of the health authorities have had, you know, their own share of trying to manage a health system, operational system, for the residents of the Northwest Territories and have had deficits over the years to be able to continue services so that way when things are budgeted, that when the day they run out, those services don't stop. That's why they have a deficit budget. And so therefore where we are today is now since past COVID, we are seeing more people accessing the services of the Northwest Territories health authority. They are sicker. And they're -- and so when you say -- when there's questions of is the money enough for 15,000 residents, maybe it was five years ago but, like, when we talk about all of these things of forced growth and -- you know, and there's so much different things around this government that we are having to put on the table to pay for, health does have one of the biggest pots of money and yet we're still struggling to be able to provide services throughout the territory. And so whether or not this is the enough amount, is it today? Is it ten years ago? Will it be with changes that we make? It may be. But we have to -- that is why some of that work is being done, to see where we are, what's the right funding that we need, and it's not just in primary care in this, in the region. It's not primary care in how we're going to do it in the -- or sorry, in the capital or in the regions, and how are we going to provide primary care to our residents in the small communities as well. So it's a huge complex -- so we can't just look at it as one hospital, one community. It's a whole territory of how we're going to service our territory. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Health and Social Services. Final supplementary. Member from Yellowknife North.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I agree that it feels overwhelming and that there might never be enough money, but we need an accurate estimate of how much funding we need to properly staff our primary care system. So my question is can the Minister estimate when we will be able to produce an accurate estimate of how much money we need? And this is not accounting for when we can actually get that money, but we need to start with having the right estimate. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I mentioned, you know, today we might be able to come up with a number and that would meet today, and then we get something else that happens and the numbers change. You know, if we are -- like, I look at our priorities in this government and working on our accessing health care doesn't just mean fixing the issues that we have at our territorial hospital and our -- you know, and in our capital. They mean fixing some of our issues in our regional centres. You know, we have our own issues in the regional centres as MLAs from those communities are fully aware. And then we hear from the small communities that are saying, can we just have a doctor come to visit us, can we have our health centre not be on emergency services. You know, these are things that we continuously hear. And so how we get there, you know, it takes all of us as a territory and we need to start looking and that's what we're doing, is we're looking to health promotion. We're looking at looking at -- you know, looking at our health centres and how we're supporting residents in those communities and so that they're accessing the health care that they need in those communities and that they're not having to be in hospital and they're not having to always travel for health care. So it is -- it's very complex and we are working on it, and it is very -- it is a priority of this government. That's why we have the health sustainability unit that is going to help to do this work as well. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Health and Social Services. Colleagues, our time is up for oral questions. Written questions. Returns to written questions. Replies to the Commissioner's address. Petitions. Tabling of documents. Minister of Finance.

Tabling of Documents

TABLED DOCUMENT 200-20(1):
SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES
(INFRASTRUCTURE EXPENDITURES), NO. 2, 2024-2025

TABLED DOCUMENT 201-20(1):
SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES
(OPERATIONS EXPENDITURES), NO. 1, 2024-2025

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following two documents: Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 2, 2024-2025; and Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditure), No. 1, 2024-2025. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Finance. Tabling of documents. Member from Great Slave.

TABLED DOCUMENT 202-20(1):
A LADDER OF CITIZEN PARTICIPATION,
SHERRY R. ARNSTEIN, 1969

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I wish to table a document entitled, A Ladder of Citizen Participation by Sherry R. Arnstein. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Great Slave. Tabling of documents. Notices of motion. Motions. Notices of motion for first reading of bills. First reading of bills. Second reading of bills. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters, Tabled Document 193-20(1), Tabled Document 200-20(1), Tabled Documents 201-20(1), with the Member from from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh in the chair.

Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Good afternoon. Calling committee to order. I now call Committee of the Whole to order. What is the wish of the committee? I'm going to go to the Member from Inuvik Boot Lake.

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, the committee wishes to consider Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 2, 2024-2025. And Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 1, 2024-2025. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Okay, thank you. We'll take a five-minute break and reconvene.

---SHORT RECESS

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Colleagues, consideration in this Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters. Tabled Document 200-20(1), Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 2, 2024-2025. Committee, we have agreed to consider Tabled Document 200-20(1) Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 2, 2024-2025. Does the Minister of Finance have any opening remarks?

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair, I do. Mr. Chair, for clarity, would you like me to do opening remarks on both at the same time or one at a time?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. If we could do both at the same time.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I am here to present Tabled Document 200-20(1), Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 2, 2024-2025. And I'll do a brief introduction to that before going to the next.

This document proposes a total increase of \$236,000, comprised of the following items:

- A \$50,000 transfer of previously approved operations expenditure funding to infrastructure expenditure, allocated for the purchase of digital dispatch consoles;
- \$993,000 for increased construction costs associated with the Inuvik to Tuktoyaktuk fibre line;
- \$1.95 million to finalize the transfer of technology service centre projects from the Department of Infrastructure to the Department of Finance;
- A decrease of \$3 million to reflect changes in the timing of planned expenditures for the Yellowknife Wellness and Recovery Centre;
- A decrease of \$7 million to reflect changes in the timing of planned expenditures for the Hay River long-term care facility;
- \$71,000 for funding in support of pegmatites research in the Slave Geological Province. This funding is fully offset by revenues received from the Government of Canada;
- \$3.5 million funding for rehabilitation work on Highway No. 3. This funding is partially offset by revenues received from the Government of Canada;
- \$5 million funding for rehabilitation work on the Liard Access Road which is fully offset by revenues received from the Government of Canada; and,
- \$622,000 for ventilation upgrades in Northwest Territories dental suites. This funding is fully offset by revenues received from the Government of Canada.

Mr. Chair, with respect to the Tabled Document 201-20(1), Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 1, 2024-2025, this document proposes a total increase of \$187.9 million comprised of the following items:

- \$69.7 million to provide funding to reflect the impact of costs associated with the implementation of the 2023-2024 to 2025-2026 collective agreement between the Union of Northern Workers and the Government of the Northwest Territories;
- \$38.9 million to provide supplemental funding for fire suppression activities related to the 2024 wildfire season;
- \$7.8 million to provide funding to reflect the impact of costs associated with the implementation of the 2023-2026 collective agreement between the Northwest Territories Teachers' Association and the Government of the Northwest Territories;
- \$6.5 million to provide funding for cable repairs on the Deh Cho Bridge;
- \$5.4 million to provide funding in support of increases to the standard physician contract as per the agreement between the NWT Medical Association and the Government of the Northwest Territories;
- \$5.3 million to provide funding for the GNWT's share of increased compensation, benefit, and administrative costs under the territorial police service agreement; and.
- \$5 million to provide funding for increased expenditures related to short-term debt.

Additionally, I am proposing the following supplementary expenditures, which are supported by federally funded agreements, including:

- \$10.6 million to provide funding for programs and activities supported by the Territorial Health Investment Fund;
- \$7.3 million to provide funding for various environment climate change cost share agreements;

- \$4.9 million to provide funding in support of an amendment to the Canada-Northwest Territories Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement.

That concludes my opening remarks, Mr. Chair, and I'd be happy to answer questions from Members.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you, Minister. Does the Minister of Finance wish to bring witnesses into the House?

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Yes, I do.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to ask the sergeant-at-arms please escort the witnesses into the chamber.

Thank you. I'm going to move on. Would the Minister please introduce her witnesses.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. On my left is Bill MacKay, the deputy minister of finance. And on my right Mandi Bolstad, deputy secretary to the financial management board.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I will now open the floor for general comments on the supplementary estimates (infrastructure expenditures). Members, who are recognized for everything, so that's good, okay. I'm going to take Members, Members want to do opening comments, general comments?

Seeing no further general comments, we will review the supplementary estimates by department. The committee has agreed to forego general comments on each department. Does the committee agree to proceed to the detail contained in the tabled documents? Committee?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. The committee has agreed to begin the review with the Department of Environment and Climate Change. Committee, we'll begin on page 5. Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 2, 2024-2025, Department of Environment and Climate Change, capital investment expenditures, wildlife and forest management, not previously authorized, \$50,000. Are there any questions?

Seeing no further questions. Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 2,

2024-2025, Department of Environment and Climate Change, capital investment expenditure, wildlife and forest management, not previously authorized, \$50,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 2, 2024-2025, Department of Environment and Climate Change, capital investment expenditures, total department not previously authorized, \$50,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Committee, we will turn to page 6 for the Department of Finance.

Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 2, 2024-2025, Department of Finance, capital investment expenditures, management board secretariat, not previously authorized, \$993,000. Are there any questions?

Seeing no further questions. Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 2, 2024-2025, Department of Finance, capital investment expenditures, management board secretariat, not previously authorized, \$993,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 2, 2024-2025, Department of Finance, capital investment expenditure, Office of the Chief Information Officer, not previously authorized, \$1,950,000. Are there any questions?

Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 2, 2024-2025, Department of Finance, capital investment expenditures, Office of the Chief Information Officer, not previously authorized, \$1,950,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 2, 2024-2025, Department of Finance, capital investment expenditures, total department not previously authorized, \$2,943,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Turn to page 7 for the Department of Health and Social Services.

Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 2, 2024-2025, Department of Health and Social Services, capital investment expenditures, health and social services program, not previously authorized, negative \$3 million. Are there any questions? I'm going to go to the Member from Yellowknife North.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So can the Minister give us an indication of what is the revised project timeline? It's talking about this is reflecting changes in the project timeline. So what is the new timeline, and does it impact the federal funding agreement in any way? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, there is no impact to the funding agreement. Typically, if there are changes of this nature, we would double check with federal counterparts just to be sure. So that certainly is fine. And with respect to the timing, the funding portion that you see here is simply being moved from the current fiscal year into a revised budget for a future year. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Yellowknife North.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you. So we're just putting it off to the future but we don't have a set timeline for when this project will be built or completed? Can the Minister clarify whether we have a set timeline and, if so, what is that timeline? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Sorry, Mr. Chair. I realize I didn't quite finish my thought before I finished speaking. It's into next fiscal year. So the 2025.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. You'd think I hadn't done this before. For 2025-2026. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go the Member from Yellowknife North.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just clarification, the project will be complete in 2025-2026? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Right now we're showing 2026-2027 as the fiscal year when the project will be fully complete. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Yellowknife North.

MS. MORGAN: That's all. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Is there any further general comments? I'm going to go to the Member from Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So for the funding, this \$3 million change here, can the Minister just speak to the -- clarify if the funding is federal funding or territorial funding? Like, the source of the funding I guess is what I'm looking for. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The wellness centre is 100 percent federally funded. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'll go to the Member from Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: Thank you. So there is some concern about the -- or the -- whether or not it will meet the needs of the current community. Is there a plan to speak to -- even though this is a financial carryover and things like that, had those concerns been brought forward and are they being addressed before the facility is finalized or construction continues and ultimately the facility is put into use? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the finance Minister.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I understand that the design for the facility is already complete and that it's, in fact, the procurement process is already as well complete and has been awarded. I would want to double check that with the Minister of health but that is my understanding, is that the process is actually quite a ways along and so they're not going to go back to redo the design and the construction bid and the procurement process. I know there were some concerns raised this summer when there was a lot of effort being made in order to ensure that we were supporting the community that were relying on an encampment and fortunately, from that work, Mr. Chair, I think there's other efforts underway to ensure that we are supporting that community and supporting the non-government sector here who does provide some sheltering services as well. So I

appreciate the Member's question. It won't be resolved through this project, but it does appear that there may be other pathways by which that solution is ultimately found. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: Thank you. Would it be safe to characterize this project as kind of a -- at least from a funding perspective, as like a done deal, you know, in terms of design and delivery, so we're not able to pump the brakes on it and retain the funding? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. That is my understanding of it. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Nothing further.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Is there any further general comments? Okay, I'm going to continue on. Thank you.

Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 2, 2024-2025, Department of Health and Social Services, capital investment expenditures, health and social services programs, not previously authorized, negative \$3 million. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 2, 2024-2025, Department of Health and Social Services, capital investment expenditures, long-term and continuing care services, not previously authorized, negative \$7 million. Are there any questions? Thank you, I'll continue on.

Supplementary Estimates -- sorry, my apologies. I'm going to go to the Member from Great Slave.

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'll put my hand up higher next time. Similar questions to the previous line item, what is the project timeline looking like for the Hay River long-term care facility with this reduction? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, this one, again, and similarly the project is underway but there is a need to revise the timing of the delivery of the project. I do expect this one, similarly, will be completed in the fiscal year of 2027-2028. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Great Slave.

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And is the delay attributable to anything that we can speak about? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I don't have detail here as to exactly what challenges there may have been, I mean aside from having been in this government and seeing the community of Hay River go through a number of various challenges and emergencies over the last couple of years, but I can say that we are expecting the design to be completed here 2025-2026, so that much is on schedule, and construction would be starting as soon as possible thereafter. And yes, Mr. Chair, the construction -- well yes, and in fact I can say with a little more certainty, Mr. Chair, that it was the 2021 flood event that did require in fact a whole new site to be selected so that it would not be impacted by future potential waters and flood waters. And with anything that kind of lasted in between that period of time to now, there's been some additional inflationary pressures on those budgets. So reason for the delay, and then a move, and then now, of course, a bit more of delay having to rescope the budget. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Great Slave.

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Nothing further.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Any further general comments from Members? Thank you.

Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 2, 2024-2025, Department of Health and Social Services, capital investment expenditures, long-term and continuing care services, not previously authorized, negative \$7 million. Does committee agree? Thank you.

Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 2, 2024-2025, Department of Health and Social Services, capital investment expenditures, total department not

previously authorized, negative \$10 million. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Please turn to page 8 for Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment.

Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 2, 2024-2025, Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment, capital investment expenditure, minerals and petroleum resources, not previously authorized, \$71,000. Are there any questions?

Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 2 -- did I miss somebody? Okay, I just want to make sure. Thank you.

Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 2, 2024-2025, Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment, capital investment expenditures, minerals and petroleum resources, not previously authorized, \$71,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 2, 2024-2025, Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment, capital investment expenditures, total department not previously authorized, \$71,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Please turn to page 9 for Department of Infrastructure.

Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 2, 2024-2025, Department of Infrastructure, capital investment expenditures, asset management, not previously authorized, \$8,500,000. Are there any questions? I'm going to go to the Member from Great Slave.

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Can the Minister please speak to how much of the costs for rehabilitation work on Highway No. 3 are offset by the Government of Canada? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, it's partial offset \$1.35 million in federal support have come in, so the net to the GNWT is \$2.15 million. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Great Slave.

MS. REID: Thanks, Mr. Chair. That's all.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Any further general comments? I'm going to go to the Member from Yellowknife North.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Can the Minister give some insight on whether this additional funding is required because more rehabilitation work is needed than we previously thought, or is this work that's being sort of bumped up and done sooner than we thought we would do it, or why are we being asked to approve sort of additional money for rehabilitation work that we didn't know about earlier? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I don't know if I have that kind of detail here. I mean, this was work that was planned for Highway No. 3. There are regular patrols done of all the highways and then planned works get done along a fairly complicated schedule that -- or complicated chart that I certainly have looked at and seen semi-regularly that shows every single highway in the North, all of the different areas of need, and ranks all of them. So this one would have come through that process, and then it was a matter of determining which types of funding are available from the federal government to apply. There has not been a recapitalizing of the National Trade Corridors Fund which was a large fund that was typically used for most of the roadways. So I think this is likely a situation of wanting to go out and try to find the funding and match that up to the work that was underway. And whether or not a fund -- or whether or not a roadway is classified as being a part of a national corridor can impact what type of funds we go to. But, again, my understanding and expectation is that this would have been planned through the process I'm describing. I'm certainly happy to provide more of that detail to Members. I'm not sure that that's necessarily what's being asked.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Yellowknife North.

MS. MORGAN: Okay, thank you, Mr. Chair. I would just ask that perhaps the Minister could provide me with some written details of what this rehabilitation work entails and what improvements we can expect. I would very much appreciate that. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, certainly happy to provide more detail. Just in brief, there is some work that's being done in terms of the drainage, culverts, surface improvements. There's dips that are -- that become present and become in some cases very severe on this particular stretch of highway and all throughout, and so trying to smooth those out which sometimes seems like an endless task. But that's the overview of it. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Yellowknife North.

MS. MORGAN: That's fine. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Is there any further general comments from Members?

Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 2, 2024-2025, Department of Infrastructure, capital investment expenditures, asset management, not previously authorized, \$8,500,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 2, 2024-2025, Department of Infrastructure, capital investment expenditures, programs and services, not previously authorized, negative \$1,328,000. Are there any questions? Seeing none.

Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 2, 2024-2025, Department of Infrastructure, capital investment expenditures, programs and services, not previously authorized, negative \$1,328,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 2, 2024-2025, Department of Infrastructure, capital investment expenditures, total department not previously authorized, \$7,172,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Do you agree that you have concluded consideration of Tabled Document 200-20(1), Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure

Expenditures), No. 2, 2024-2025? Member from Inuvik Boot Lake.

COMMITTEE MOTION 39-20(1):
CONCURRENCE MOTION – Tabled
DOCUMENT 200-20(1): SUPPLEMENTARY
ESTIMATES (INFRASTRUCTURE
EXPENDITURES), NO. 2, 2024-2025,
CARRIED

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I move that consideration of Tabled Document 200-20(1), Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 2, 2024-2025 be now concluded and that the Tabled Document 200-20(1) be reported and recommended as ready for further consideration in formal session through the form of an appropriation bill. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. The motion is in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried. Tabled Document 200-20(1), Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 2, 2024-2025, will be reported as ready for consideration in formal session through the form of an appropriation bill.

---Carried

Thank you, Minister, and thank you to your witnesses for appearing before us.

Thank you. We're going to continue on.

Committee, we have agreed to consider Tabled Document 202-20(1), Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 1, 2024-2025. I'm going to move on. I will now open the floor for general comments. Member from Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: Yes, thank you, Mr. Chair. I'll be brief. The supplementary estimates contain, amongst other things, increases due to the last round of collective bargaining and items that were negotiated by Members on this side of the House with Members of that side of the House to improve services to our constituents. So largely this is something I welcome. It is part of our process to realign spending priorities based on needs and the things in here are the result of -- many of the spending in here is a result of the hard work of all Members of this House to find compromise and better reflect the needs of our communities. So I just wanted to put that clearly on the record in case anyone listening

was interested in the overall picture painted by these supplementary estimates. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Is there any further general comments from Members? Seeing none.

Committee, we will begin on page 3 with the Legislative Assembly. Are there any questions? Sorry about that. Seeing no further general comments, we will review the supplementary estimates by department. The committee has agreed to forego general comments on each department. Does the committee agree to proceed to the detail contained in the tabled document?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Committee, we will begin on page 3 with the Legislative Assembly. Are there any questions? Seeing none, I'll continue on.

Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 1, 2024-2025, Legislative Assembly, Office of the Chief Electoral Officer, not previously authorized, \$31,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 1, 2024-2025, Legislative Assembly, Office of the Clerk, not previously authorized, \$422,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 1, 2024-2025, Legislative Assembly, Office of the Speaker, not previously authorized, \$8,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 1, 2024-2025, Legislative Assembly, statutory officer, not previously authorized, \$224,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 1, 2024-2025, Legislative Assembly, total not previously authorized, \$685,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Committee, we will now consider the Department of Education, Culture and Employment starting at page 4. Are there any questions? Seeing none, moving on.

Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 1, 2024-2025, Department of Education, Culture and Employment, corporate management, not previously authorized, \$643,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 1, 2024-2025, Department of Education, Culture and Employment, early learning, not previously authorized \$8,685,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 1, 2024-2025, Department of Education, Culture and Employment, education, not previously authorized, \$13,993,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 1, 2024-2025, Department of Education, Culture and Employment, income security, not previously authorized, \$729,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 1, 2024-2025, Department of Education, Culture and Employment, labour development and standards, not previously authorized, \$1,743,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 1, 2024-2025, Department of Education, Culture and Employment, language and culture, not previously authorized, \$885,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 1, 2024-2025, Department of Education, Culture and Employment, total

department not previously authorized, \$25,778,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you, committee. We will now consider the table Department of Environment and Climate Change starting on page 6. Are there any questions? Seeing none.

Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 1, 2024-2025, Department of Environment and Climate Change, corporate management, not previously authorized, \$1,426,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 1, 2024-2025, Environment and Climate Change, environment management monitoring and climate change, not previously authorized, \$2,816,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 1, 2024-2025, Department of Environment and Climate Change, policies strategic planning, not previously authorized, \$3,286,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 1, 2024-2025, Department of Environment and Climate Change, not change -- regulatory assessment and authorization of not previously authorized, \$907,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 1, 2024-2025, Department of Environment and Climate Change, wildlife and forest management, not previously authorized, \$43,287,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 1, 2024-2025, Department of Environment and Climate Change, total department not previously authorized, \$51,722,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Committee, we will now consider the Department of Executive and Indigenous Affairs starting on page 9. Are there any questions? Seeing none, continue on.

Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 1, 2024-2025, Department of Executive and Indigenous Affairs, Cabinet support, not previously authorized, \$172,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 1, 2024-2025, Department of Executive and Indigenous Affairs, corporate communications, not previously authorized, \$105,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 1, 2024-2025, Department of Executive and Indigenous Affairs, directorate, not previously authorized, \$4,981,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Before we move on here, I'm going to go to the Member from Yellowknife North.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So a couple questions on this one. The first is to clarify whether or not the funding for activities to support a strategic approach to homelessness in Yellowknife, is that covered by federal funds or not? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. No, it's not, Mr. Chair. I think there's some discussions underway to see if there's somewhere we might find some funding, but this is currently fully funded by the GNWT. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Yellowknife North.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Can the Minister give clarification on what this \$2.28 million is allocated for? What does it mean to support a strategic approach to Yellowknife -- to homelessness in Yellowknife? Or give us a sense of what's happening here. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair, happy to do so. Mr. Chair, obviously this summer there was a situation in Yellowknife where a number of folks who are underhoused were living in tents and the numbers surrounding homelessness and underhoused individuals in Yellowknife seemed to take a rather significant increase as a result of which one of the positives that came from that experience was that the Departments of Executive and Indigenous Affairs, Health and Social Services, were able to work with the non-government sector that provides a number of services, work with this community to determine what some of the different needs of this population were. Some folks prefer to be not in a formalized situation and others were in a position to look for the opportunity to be in transitional housing. Having done that work, there was a quick effort to determine that the Salvation Army would be capable of undertaking another eight beds with some increased capacity. There was an opportunity with another non-profit here in the city to work with them to establish an on-the-land camp outside of the city for individuals who would like a more stable location with sobriety at the core. And those are solutions -- the eight beds in the Salvation Army stands, but being outside of the city for some 30 or so people, that is only going to be an option until the weather becomes particularly severe. And so a remainder amount, \$1.8 million of what's remaining, is to develop a supportive living situation or a supportive living arrangement in the Kam Lake area so that people would have something that's more long-term that again though takes them away to -- from being in the downtown area into what would hopefully be a situation of greater sobriety for them. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Yellowknife North.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And thanks to the Minister for that explanation. My understanding was that the federal government had announced that they had special funding for dealing with encampments and trying to find solutions across the country and that that might be a potential for the NWT to be able to tap into that federal funding envelope. Is that something that is being pursued and might have the potential to help offset some of the costs here? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, yes, it is being pursued. However, the circumstance that we found ourselves in, as the weather was starting to turn and as the location where some individuals were had been using as an encampment had another purpose assigned to it, namely, for public housing, a situation -- or a solution had to be found more quickly. So, again, another shout-out, really, to the non-profit sector for working very closely with the GNWT. A very lengthy and thorough review was done of every possible location in the city from hotels to available units and that's where these solutions were put forward. The encampment funds could get us up to about million dollars. That's certainly our hope. So, you know, it may well be that because of this creative and, you know -- again, creative solution and a solution that was really in partnership, hopefully then the federal government looks positively on that kind of circumstance and will, indeed, put forward the \$1 million. For the moment, Mr. Chair, this a must to move forward given the change in weather here. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Yellowknife North.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And I certainly commend the government for taking quick action in this case and moving forward and allocating our own dollars to address a problem and taking bold action that way, and certainly I do hope we can recoup some of it through federal funding but I think it's a good -- it's a good way to operate to be able to take action that is needed and urgent.

Another question in this section: To clarify, the funding for the health care system sustainability unit, first, just a clarification, are we using money from the territorial health investment fund to offset that unit, or is there some other federal funding arrangement? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, Mr. Chair, this is, I believe, fully funded by the federal government. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Yellowknife North.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Can the Minister give some indication if it's funded by the federal government, is there a set time period where this funding will stop? Like, are we being given funding for a set period of time, or are we committed to funding this unit for a

number of years? Are there time limits set on the existence of this unit given that it's fully coming through federal funding? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, the current Territorial Health Investment Fund goes until March 31st, and the -- it does support work in a number of different areas with respect specifically to -- there's -- this one -- yes, this one goes until 2028, and that's -- so that would be the timeline for the health care system sustainability unit. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Yellowknife North.

MS. MORGAN: Okay. No, that's very useful to know. Thank you, Mr. Chair, that we at least feel confident about funding for this unit until 2028. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Is there any further general comments from Members? Seeing none, I'll continue on.

Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 1, 2024-2025, Department of Executive and Indigenous Affairs, Executive Council offices, not previously authorized, \$306,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 1, 2024-2025, Department of Executive and Indigenous Affairs, Indigenous and Intergovernmental Affairs, not previously authorized, \$461,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 1, 2024-2025, Department of Executive and Indigenous Affairs, total department not previously authorized, \$6,025,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Committee, we will now consider the Department of Finance starting on page 11. Are there any questions? Seeing none, continuing on.

Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 1, 2024-2025, Department

of Finance, directorate, not previously authorized, \$6,510,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 1, 2024-2025, Department of Finance, human resources, not previously authorized, \$1,342,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 1, 2024-2025, Department of Finance, management board secretariat, not previously authorized, \$389,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 1, 2024-2025, Department of Finance, Office of the Chief Information Officer, not previously authorized, \$1,033,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 1, 2024-2025, Department of Finance, Office of the Comptroller General, not previously authorized, \$7,601,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 1, 2024-2025, Department of Finance, total department not previously authorized, \$16,875,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Committee, we will now consider the Department of Health and Social Services starting on page 13. Are there any questions from Members? Seeing none, continuing on.

Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 1, 2024-2025, Department of Health and Social Services, administrative support services, not previously authorized, \$5,291,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 1, 2024-2025, Department of Health and Social Services, health and social services programs, not previously authorized, \$34,481,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 1, 2024-2025, Department of Health and Social Services long-term or continuing care services, not previously authorized, \$4,028,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 1, 2024-2025, Department of Health and Social Services, supplementary health programs, not previously authorized, \$5 million. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 1, 2024-2025, Department of Health and Social Services, total department not previously authorized, \$48,800,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Committee, we will now consider the Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment starting on page 15. Are there any questions? Thank you.

Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 1, 2024-2025, Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment, corporate management, not previously authorized, \$510,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 1, 2024-2025, Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment, economic diversification and business support, not previously authorized, \$2,449,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 1, 2024-2025, Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment, mineral and petroleum resources, not previously

authorized, \$1,323,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 1, 2024-2025, Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment, tourism and parks, not previously authorized, \$475,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 1, 2024-2025, Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment, total department not previously authorized, \$4,757,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Committee, we will now consider the Department of Infrastructure starting on page 16. Are there any questions? Member from Frame Lake.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I just wanted to ask some questions about the -- follow-up actually on the questions asked earlier today by the Member for Deh Cho.

For the cable repairs on the Deh Cho Bridge, you know, knowing that there were defects in the metallurgy of the metals that were used, to what extent is the company that provided that product liable for that cost? Can the Minister share any insights with us as to our success in kind of pursuing compensation for those materials? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, that's probably a question for the Minister of Infrastructure, and that Minister doesn't have a briefing binder on the detail here. I can assure the House and the Member that I asked that very same question, and somewhere just around the timing of it in terms of -- and, again, I don't want to misstate certainly here on the floor, but my recollection is that we were just outside of the time of when there would have been warranty and that the nature of what occurred would not be one that would be covered. So, you know, I certainly haven't ruled out as I understand the potential for some degree of an insurance claim and, you know, again, were that to happen it wouldn't be something that we could speak to here. So just to assure that I've asked those questions and, again, we may be in a tight spot. Certainly, we

don't want to delay repairing the bridge to sort out some of those issues. That would come at a later date and if we can recoup those costs, all the better. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Frame Lake.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you for that answer. And I certainly encourage the Minister to pursue whatever means they can to kind of recoup any costs associated with material defects.

The next question is on the Hay River harbour restoration project, I note that that one's not covered by any federal funding but is -- the Hay River harbour is something that I'm sure the feds access through coast guard ships. I'm just curious to what extent does the Minister feel that the federal government, you know, uses this infrastructure and should perhaps be considering -- we should be looking to them to chip in for restoration themselves. Thanks.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, until 1997, the dredging of the Hay River harbour was, in fact, completed by Public Works and Government Services Canada on behalf of Transport Canada. Indeed, the coast guard does rely on the accessible channel and the ability to move their ships and vessels through this very same space. However, for reasons I'm certainly not privy to, between 1997 and 2012, that started to change. The GNWT was relying on funding and started to undertake the work. There was still at that time a memorandum of understanding with the Canadian coast guard and Department of Fisheries and Oceans but then it has somehow fallen off the wayside since 2012, and obviously we were in a situation, particularly with the low water, where this was falling to the GNWT to step up.

I do want to note our federal friends did support our efforts with the contribution towards the work that was underway but obviously, you know, it is not lost on me that the coast guard ships are required in order to make the river navigable and to provide basic safety certainly as well. So we'll certainly hopefully look to opportunities to see what they, through Department of Fisheries and Oceans, coast guard, etcetera, can do to ensure navigable waters through the Northwest Territories. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Frame Lake.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yeah, no, this is something that I -- it just occurred to me because, you know, I happen to -- we were down there in the fall and I note that the coast guard ship was there, so I'm just looking at this and seeing GNWT's footing the bill, feds are accessing this infrastructure and using it, and indeed it's required for them to carry out their work, so I strongly support the Minister publicly and in kind of going back to the coast guard and reminding them of this firmly and repeatedly. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to continue on. Member from the Deh Cho.

MRS. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Chair. In my statement earlier, the Minister said the cost would be \$7 million, so here it's \$6.5 million. And the other question I have is where is the company that's going to do this repair; where are they from? Where's the company from? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the finance Minister.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I'm just trying to see if I have their location. The construction company is Surespan Contracting. They're -- I don't believe they're locally-based. This is fairly specialized and technical work. I'd have to get back to the House with respect to where they are located. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from the Deh Cho.

MRS. YAKELEYA: And so the quote you gave me -- well, the number you gave me earlier was \$7 million. This one's \$6.5 million. Which one's the correct one?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, the estimate we do have and what we are appropriating is \$6.5 million. So that is the estimate right now, and hopefully, you know -- yes, you know, total costs, as I understand it, for all things engineering, fabrication, construction, the work that was done to prepare the testing, etcetera, is at \$6.8 million, so this \$7 million was me rounding up \$6.8 million, Mr. Chair, and I should be more specific. \$6.8 million in total. This is \$6.5 million. This is the amount we don't have. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Deh Cho.

MRS. YAKELEYA: So once this is all said and done, repairs will be completed by -- I'm going to say the second week -- second week or the first week of November? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, the date when we are expecting the part to -- the cables themselves to arrive would be the first week of November, in the region. It will take a total of three months to get all 24 cables replaced. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from the Deh Cho.

MRS. YAKELEYA: Sorry, my -- in our conversation with -- earlier, I assumed that some of those cables were already looked at. Not yet, nothing happened -- nothing has happened yet expect for estimate -- they just estimated it, or?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. No, Mr. Chair, I would say a lot more is done than that. I didn't have the exact date of the completion. It was my own error. So where we're at right now, the initial problem was identified back in August, so about a year and some ago. A lot of testing was done immediately in lab-based tests to ensure whether the problem was engineering, construction, design, or otherwise. They were able to identify that it was the metal itself, which is the point at which they went out to the original constructor of the bridge to have those pieces rebuilt or recast. So those 24 anchors were already -- that's already been done. The procurement was done. The construction or the building of those was done. They've been shipped. They're en route. There was a bit of delay in how long it took them to get here and to get along the way here. They're not here yet. They are en route, and they're due in the Northwest Territories first week of November. Once they get here, we had gone out -- rather than waiting and doing the construction piece for the parts first and then doing a separate procurement for construction, we did it simultaneously so that once -- so that the company Surespan that's actually doing the building, they are mobilizing simultaneously. What that means is they will be on site ready to go at the same time that those cables, the large cables arrive, rather than waiting. I have since this afternoon been able to confirm that it is a three-month process to completely install all 24 -- or replace all 24 which does actually take

us to the end of January. I think earlier I had said end of this calendar year, but it is more like a three-month time span that we're looking at to completely replace everything. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Okay, thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from the Deh Cho.

MRS. YAKELEYA: Thank you. Not to alarm anyone, but is there -- can the rest of the material be compromised? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, actually, quite fortunately I'm pleased to have that question. I'm actually really glad to have that question. We certainly don't want members of the public to be out and concerned. So I can say that right initially -- again, as I said earlier, it was within two days there was engineers on site doing a full site assessment and they did testing on site. They also then pulled the piece that was damaged, did further testing on that piece. But what they've done since is they've actually went back and looked at all 23 other remaining connectors, and they've done that over the course of some time. So there was tests that were done in August, then again in November, again in March of this year, July of this year, and at every point in time there's been no concerns noted. If anything, the decision to replace all 24 was done as a precaution. The insurance company has not requested that. No one's requested that of us. But it's being done as a precaution simply based on the fact that it was a metallurgical failure and knowing that that came all from the same batch. There wanted to be no uncertainty obviously given the impacts and the need for a high degree of safety here. But they've been -- all those tests have come back clean, and no other indications that there's any problems whatsoever. Nevertheless, the entire thing will get replaced. Thank you

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from the Deh Cho.

MRS. YAKELEYA: Thank you. Thank you for that. Mr. Chair, so then because there's -- it's defective material, there's no warranty and insurance doesn't cover that? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, we were just outside of the warranty period, unfortunately. With respect to whether or not there might be an insurance

claim, that, Mr. Chair, I think does remain something of an open question. You know, again, the decision to ultimately replace them was based on the fact of the concern for a risk, and so whether or not the insurance company will accept that as being an insurable risk or not, again I at this point can't say. That'll be up to the insurance company. But I don't think a final decision has been made on whether we will pursue that or not. Again, wouldn't delay the work itself to work through that process. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from the Deh Cho.

MRS. YAKELEYA: That's it. I have no final -- I don't have any further questions. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Any further questions from -- general comments from Members? Seeing none, I'll continue on.

Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 1, 2024-2025, Department of Infrastructure, asset management, not previously authorized, \$9,583,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 1, 2024-2025, Department of Infrastructure, corporate management, not previously authorized, \$334,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 1, 2024-2025, Department of Infrastructure, energy and strategic initiatives, not previously authorized, \$1,896,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 1, 2024-2025, Department of Infrastructure, programs and services, not previously authorized, \$651,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 1, 2024-2025, Department of Infrastructure, regional operations, not previously authorized, \$3,093,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 1, 2024-2025, Department of Infrastructure, total department not previously authorized, \$15,557,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. We will now consider the Department of Justice starting on page 12. Are there any questions? I'm going to go to the Member from Great Slave.

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'll try to be brief, and this is more just of an understanding question. I've noted throughout this supplementary estimate that several departments have funding under the national action plan to end gender-based violence. Here is Justice, it's \$57,000. Could the Minister please explain why it's broken up over Justice, HSS, and EIA briefly. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'll go to the Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I believe all of this funding actually came from WAGE Canada, so it came from one source within the department -- within the federal system but is being split between different departments to undertake different streams. There was a number of different pillars under which the federal money was allotted. And so we were able to utilize those different streams to achieve different goals within departments but it's ultimately achieving, you know, a whole-of-government approach towards ending gender-based violence, which is how we approached the problem, so that's why it's split between multiple departments rather than just sitting in one. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Earlier, I had mentioned I was on page 12. I was told it's on page 18. I'll continue on with the Member from Great Slave.

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And thank you to the Minister. So I recognize that I'm being a little saucy in talking about things that aren't currently on this page but I'm just trying to understand. So WAGE Canada, thank you for that. This is an appropriation though so I'm assuming it's extra money received that was not necessarily anticipated in the original budget? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'll go to the Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Sorry, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I've just lost the page that I'm looking for. So why don't I turn it to Ms. Bolstad. I think she has it in front of her.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Deputy minister.

MS. MELANIE BOLSTAD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So this funding is lapsed funding from the 2023-2024 fiscal year that's being brought forward. WAGE has approved that so it will be -- it's in the supplementary appropriation broken out by department from the \$1.6 million that was lapsed in the prior fiscal year. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Great Slave.

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And so that begs the question, is this the last time we're going to see this funding? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I believe that this is actually a multi-year agreement with the federal government. I believe, in fact, a four-year agreement. Thank you. So yes, thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Great Slave.

MS. REID: Thank you. And what year are we on of that four-year agreement, please?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. To the Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. It was executed back in 2023 so that would put us, I think, in the third year of its operation. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Okay, thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Great Slave.

MS. REID: That's all for now. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Is there any further general comments from Members? Okay, thank you. I'll continue on.

Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 1, 2024-2025, Department of Justice, community and justice, not previously authorized, \$1,547,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 1, 2024-2025, Department of Justice, corrections, not previously authorized, \$5,322,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 1, 2024-2025, Department of Justice, court services, not previously authorized, \$844,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 1, 2024-2025, Department of Justice, legal aid services, not previously authorized, \$521,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 1, 2024-2025, Department of Justice, Office of the Regulator of Oil and Gas Operation, not previously authorized, \$57,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 1, 2024-2025, Department of Justice, policing services, not previously authorized, \$5,303,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 1, 2024-2025, Department of Justice, services to government, not previously authorized, \$844,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 1, 2024-2025, Department of Justice, services to the public, not previously authorized, \$419,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 1, 2024-2025, Department

of Justice, total department not previously authorized, \$14,857,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. We will now consider the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs starting on page 20. Are there any questions from Members? Seeing none, I'll continue on.

Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 1, 2024-2025, Department of Municipal and Community Affairs, community governance, not previously authorized, \$1,321,000. Does the committee agree -- oh sorry, I'm going to go to the Member from Yellowknife North.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. My question is what is the property taxation revenue program that appears there? An additional \$600,000 that does not appear to be offset by federal funding, what is this program? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, the Property Assessment and Taxation Act is what makes the Department of Finance or Minister of Finance the taxation authority. We establish the mill rates. We collect the taxes, provide MACA with a list of those tax dollars that are collected for those communities that are taxable -- taxation communities, then MACA distributes the grant monies that are equivalent to the actual amount of those property taxes that are collected back to the community less an administration fee, and that's -- does come in at an average of \$600,000. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Yellowknife North.

MS. MORGAN: Okay, so this just represents the money that was collected in property taxes by municipalities that we are then returning back to municipalities, so it's just money sort of coming in and out. That's what this line item represents? Can the Minister clarify. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Yes, that's correct, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Yellowknife North.

MS. MORGAN: That's fine, thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Is there any further general comments from the Members? Thank you, I'll continue on.

I'll go back to Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 1, 2024-2025, Department of Municipal and Community Affairs, community governance, not previously authorized, \$1,321,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 1, 2024-2025, Department of Municipal and Community Affairs, community government learning and development, not previously authorized, \$95,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 1, 2024-2025, Department of Municipal and Community Affairs, community operations, not previously authorized, \$169,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 1, 2024-2025, Department of Municipal and Community Affairs, directorate, not previously authorized, \$196,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 1, 2024-2025, Department of Municipal and Community Affairs, emergency management, not previously authorized, \$70,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 1, 2024-2025, Department of Municipal and Community Affairs, public safety, not previously authorized, \$199,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 1, 2024-2025, Department of Municipal and Community Affairs, regional operations, not previously authorized, \$640,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 1, 2024-2025, Department of Municipal and Community Affairs, spots and recreation youth, not previously authorized, \$167,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 1, 2024-2025, Department of Municipal and Community Affairs, total department not previously authorized, \$2,857,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Members, there is a schedule on page 22 to 24 that details the supplementary reserve impact. This schedule is not a voteable item and is included as information only. Are there any questions on this schedule from Members? Seeing none, no further questions. As this is not a voteable item, we will continue on.

Committee, do you agree that you have concluded consideration of Tabled Document 201-20(1), Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 1, 2024-2025?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): I'm going to go to the Member from Inuvik Boot Lake.

COMMITTEE MOTION 40-20(1):
CONCURRENCE MOTION – TABLED
DOCUMENT 201-20(1): SUPPLEMENTARY
ESTIMATES (OPERATIONS
EXPENDITURES), NO. 1, 2024-2025,
CARRIED

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I move that consideration of Tabled Document 201-20(1), Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 1, 2024-2025, be now concluded and that the Tabled Document 201-20(1) be reported and recommended as ready for further consideration in formal session through the form of an appropriation bill. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): The motion's in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? Motion carried. The motion is number 2 carried -- Tabled Document 201-20(1) will be reported as ready for consideration in formal session through the form of an appropriation bill.

---Carried

Thank you, Minister, and thank you to your witnesses for appearing before us. Sergeant-at-arms, please escort the witnesses from the chambers. Thank you.

Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Inuvik Boot Lake.

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I move that the chair rise and report progress. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. There's a motion on the floor to report progress. The motion is in order and non-debatable. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

I will now rise and report progress. Thank you.

Report of Committee of the Whole

MR. SPEAKER: Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

MR. EDJERICON: Mr. Speaker, your committee has been considering Tabled Document 200-20(1) and Tabled Document 201-20(1) and would like to report progress with two motions carried, and the consideration of Tabled Documents 200-20(1) and 201-20(1) are concluded, and the House concur in those estimates and that an appropriation bill can be based thereon be introduced without delay. And, Mr. Speaker, I move that the report of the Committee of the Whole be concurred with. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. Can I have a seconder? Member from Hay River North. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. All those in favour? Opposed? Abstentions? The motion is carried.

---Carried

Report of Committee of the Whole. Orders of the day. Oh, we want to go to third reading of bills? Okay, we can do that. You know, cutting into time here. No, I was just -- nine minutes.

Third reading of bills. Minister of Justice.

Third Reading of Bills

BILL 7:
MISCELLANEOUS STATUTE LAW
AMENDMENT ACT, 2024,
CARRIED

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Hay River South, that Bill 7, Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2024, be read for the third time. And, Mr. Speaker, I requested a recorded vote. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The Minister of Justice has asked for a recorded vote. All those in favour, please stand -- oh, question first. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: See what happens when you're lollygagging for a long time. All right, all those in favour, please stand.

RECORDED VOTE

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): The Member for Hay River North. The Member for Hay River South. The Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. The Member for Nunakput. The Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. The Member for Deh Cho. The Member for Sahtu. The Member for Yellowknife Centre. The Member for Range Lake. The Member for Inuvik Boot Lake. The Member for Monfwi. The Member for Frame Lake. The Member for Great Slave. The Member for Mackenzie Delta. The Member for Yellowknife North. The Member for Thebacha. The Member for Yellowknife South. The Member for Kam Lake.

MR. SPEAKER: All those opposed, please stand. All those abstaining, please stand. Thank you, Mr. Clerk. All those in favour, 18. Those opposed, zero. Abstentions, zero. The motion has passed. Bill 7 has had its third reading.

---Carried

Member from Yellowknife Centre.

BILL 8:
AN ACT TO AMEND THE STUDENT
FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE ACT,
CARRIED

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move, seconded by the honourable Member for the Sahtu, that Bill 8, An Act to Amend the Student Financial Assistance Act, be read for the third time. And, Mr. Speaker, I request a recorded vote. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. To the motion. Member from Kam Lake.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to begin by thanking the Member for Yellowknife Centre for advancing Bill 8. This Private Member's bill reflects a commitment to students across the Northwest Territories and helps respond to the evolving financial pressures they face. I commend the Member for this initiative on this issue and for championing a cause that matters to students.

Bill 8 proposes to raise the maximum amount of loans that can be made to one person under the Student Financial Assistance Act from the current limit of \$60,000 to \$90,000. The Department of Education, Culture and Employment analyzed data from a review of the student financial assistance program to determine whether increasing the loan limit would actually provide needed supports for some students.

The analysis showed that while most SFA recipients can complete their studies within the current loan limit, students with more than two dependants would need a higher loan limit to complete a four-year program with remissible loans. For example, the average student with up to five dependants would need a loan limit of almost \$90,000 to complete a four-year program.

Informed by this analysis, I am pleased to say that Cabinet is prepared to support Bill 8. This change will empower more students, especially those with dependants or those pursuing longer more specialized degrees, to complete their studies and return to the North where they can contribute to our workforce and our communities. Allowing more students to access the financial resources they need to pursue post-secondary education is consistent with this Legislative Assembly's priority to build a strong economic foundation.

The department has studied the impacts of increasing the loan limit and acknowledges that implementing this change will take some time. The department is committed to working diligently to update our documents and to contact students about the change as quickly as possible. We ask for students' patience as we carry out this very important work to serve them.

The department is also considering how this change will impact the overall limit on the student revolving loan fund. Currently, the fund has a maximum aggregate balance of \$45 billion with \$40.8 million already outstanding. As we move forward, we will need to evaluate the need for further adjustments to ensure the sustainability of the fund.

In closing, I want to thank the Member again for bringing forward this Private Member's bill. These changes will further strengthen our student financial assistance program, one of our most effective programs built by Northerners for Northerners. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. To the motion. Member for Monfwi.

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I will support this bill with the recommendation made to improve the education outcome in small -- for the Indigenous students in small communities. Increasing the student loans from 60 to \$90,000 is a strong indication that non-Indigenous are using the student loans more. That's why we're here now. But, Mr. Speaker, there are so many reports out there, going back as far as the Royal Commission Report on Aboriginal People, the Auditor General's report on education, Truth and Reconciliations, MMIWG, etcetera -- there's a lot of reports out there -- that says in order for the Indigenous students to advance, they need to improve -- the government needs to improve the education outcome. And just the same as what MLA Yellowknife Centre has said yesterday, we would like to see that too for our Indigenous students. We would like to see more our Indigenous students advancing themselves by attending post-secondary education to take Master's programs, PhDs, and undergrad, other professional fields, but we don't have too many of those in our small communities. So with that in mind, I will support this motion at this time with the recommendations made to improve the education outcome for Indigenous students in small communities. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Monfwi. To the motion. Member from Range Lake -- or Yellowknife Centre. Let's try that again, Member from Yellowknife Centre.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was hoping to go last but I'll go any time you call upon me. That said, I just wanted to use the opportunity to thank everyone for being involved in this process. Again, I want to acknowledge the Thomas family for their advocacy. It is a grassroots initiative brought to

the Assembly. This is to hopefully help many students bring more education to the North and can help empower people, and that's -- you know, it's an exciting process to feel that you're helping energize young people and get them into, you know, creating the future for all of us. So, Mr. Speaker, I won't take up a lot of time. I've already spoken on this a few occasions. And I think all kids of this initiative will be blessed.

And lastly, I want to stress I do appreciate the Member from Monfwi. And I know she has qualified support, which I respect, and I -- and I'm grateful, as I said yesterday, that I would do my advocacy as well to help support the initiative education issue as well, and I sincerely mean that. And I don't know if that was the difference of having her consider the option proposal, but I certainly meant what I said which was I would help her on her fight to help raise standards of living, quality of education, and outcomes for Indigenous communities and their citizens as well. So, again, thank you to all Members. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Yellowknife Centre. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. Request for a recorded vote. For all those in favour, please stand.

RECORDED VOTE

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): The Member for Yellowknife Centre. The Member for Range Lake. The Member for Inuvik Boot Lake. The Member for Monfwi. The Member for Frame Lake. The Member for Great Slave. The Member for Mackenzie Delta. The Member for Yellowknife North. The Member for Thebacha. The Member for Yellowknife South. The Member for Kam Lake. The Member for Hay River North. The Member for Hay River South. The Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. The Member for Nunakput. The Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. The Member for Deh Cho. The Member for Sahtu.

MR. SPEAKER: All those opposed, please stand. All those abstaining, please stand. All those in favour, 18. Opposed, zero. Abstentions, zero. Bill No. 8 has now passed.

---Carried

Orders of the day, Mr. Clerk.

Orders of the Day

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland):
Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Orders of the day for
Wednesday, October 23rd, 2024, at 1:30 p.m.

1. Prayer
2. Ministers' Statements
3. Members' Statements
4. Returns to Oral Questions
 - Oral Question 297-20(1):
Wellness and Addictions
Recommendations
5. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
6. Acknowledgements
7. Oral Questions
8. Written Questions
9. Returns to Written Questions
10. Replies to the Commissioner's
Address
11. Petitions
12. Reports of Committees on the Review
of Bills
13. Reports of Standing and Special
Committees
14. Tabling of Documents
15. Notices of Motion
16. Motions
17. Notices of Motion for First Reading of
Bills
18. First Reading of Bills
19. Second Reading of Bills
20. Consideration in Committee of the
Whole of Bills and Other Matters
 - Tabled Document 193-20(1),
2025-2026 Capital Estimates
21. Report of Committee of the Whole
22. Third Reading of Bills
23. Orders of the Day

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, folks.

This House stands adjourned until Wednesday,
October 23rd, 2024, at 1:30 p.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 6:01 p.m.